

Horizon

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

PROSPECT FOR MEDICINE

by KENNETH SINCLAIR-LOUIT

THE YOGI AND THE COMMISSAR

by ARTHUR KOESTLER

ANDRÉ GIDE

by PETER QUENNELL

IMAGINARY INTERVIEWS (*concluded*)

by ANDRÉ GIDE

SOREL, PARETO, SPENGLER:

THREE FASCIST PHILOSOPHERS

by FRANZ BORKENAU

KALIGHAT FOLK-PAINTERS

by AJIT MOOKERJEE

MODERN POETS AND REVIEWERS

by STEPHEN SPENDER

REPRODUCTIONS OF PAINTINGS *by* GERALD WILDE
and JOHN BANTING and Kalighat Folk-paintings

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Edited by Cyril Connolly

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HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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COMMENT

WHEN *Horizon* was founded a letter was written to Gide asking him to contribute, to which he replied that he was under a vow of silence not to write anything till the war was over. This vow he has now broken, and this month we conclude the series of *Imaginary Interviews* which appeared at the beginning of this year in the literary page of the *Figaro*, a Vichy paper which has been once or twice suspended for its views, and which clearly preserves the nearest possible likeness to a pre-war French newspaper. Apart from the interest attaching to anything written by Gide, who is the greatest living writer in Europe, and who—as can be seen by comparing the last quotation in Peter Quennell's article with the last sentence of Gide's interview—writes most consciously for the future, the articles reveal how much can still be said in unoccupied France, and what lengthy grammatical involutions are necessary in which to say it. What is most remarkable, however, is the point of view of Gide's young interviewer, for the opinions of this Fascist representative of a defeated nation are some held by many people in England today. It is clear, therefore, that the opinions which coincide with those of a defeated Fascist country cannot represent the ideas which will be found in a victorious democracy, and in case any of our readers are being infected without knowing it we append a questionnaire for them.

1. Do you believe that every human being is either a knave or a fool?
2. Have you noticed how it is always the people with more money than you who invariably try to cheat you?
3. Do you agree that what this country needs is a Cromwell?
4. Do you think it is right to lie to the masses for their own good?
5. Do you think people will swallow anything?
6. Do you think the Fall of France was due to neglect of the family?
7. Do you think we overvalue human life?
8. Do you think (1) Progress, (2) Culture, and (3) Civilization are a lot of bunk?
9. Do you agree that Black Marketers should be shot?
10. Do you think we need a Youth Movement in England?

11. Do you think women are unhappier since they have had more freedom?
12. Do you think the Art and Literature of a country can only be appreciated by the inhabitants of that country?
13. Do you agree that no Jew has ever been a great creative artist?
14. Do you think the seventeenth was greater than the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries?
15. Do you think the Art and Literature of our country at some time in the past has been vitiated by foreign influences and has never quite recovered?
16. Do you feel that an artist should not travel or live in cities, but be part of a rural community with a strong regional life?
17. Do you think we all should be made to work very much harder after the war, and to do without a great many things?
18. Have the Intellectuals let you down?
19. Should those who lived abroad before the war, or who led irregular lives, have things made a bit hot for them?
20. Do you agree that the existence of the individual can only be justified through the dynamism of the race?

If you can say 'Yes' to more than half these questions you are definitely Fascist-minded; if you can say 'Yes' to fifteen you are lucky not to be in Brixton; if you can say 'Yes' to twenty you should stand at once as an Independent Candidate.

These questions have been composed by the editor and not by a bureau of experts. Do not, therefore, write to point out how unscientific, obscure, or elementary they may seem. Because the cumulative result of answering 'Yes' is significant it does not follow that the right answer is invariably 'No'—nor are they very profound, though they cover several Fascist doctrines. To investigate its roots more deeply, turn to Borkenau's article in this number.

Koestler's discussion will be concluded in the next number, by a tentative solution. Dr. Loutit is Medical Officer for Civil Defence for the Borough of Finsbury, and ran a mobile military hospital in the Spanish War. Ajit Mookerjee is now in England.

Horizon would like to thank *La France Libre* for supplying nine out of the ten copies of *Le Figaro*, in which Gide's Interviews appeared, and a subscriber for procuring the other.

KENNETH SINCLAIR-LOUTIT

THE PROSPECT FOR MEDICINE

PEOPLE generally in England are fascinated by the detail of a doctor's work, descriptions of hospital wards with the nurses moving silently around are pitched in a distorted romanticism. Miracle drugs are greeted with banner headlines. New operations are described with a wealth of detail as they are discovered by the diligent reporters. In fact everything and anything concerned with the medical profession is news except comment on its general efficiency; Press interest here would be reckoned in similar taste to an inquiry into the efficiency of the Crown. Even the outpatient who waits two or three hours or perhaps spends a whole day on the corridors and benches of some archaic hospital does not more than grumble. He accepts the state of affairs as lamentable but irremediable, like a train being late.

From time to time a general stocktaking is forced upon the medical profession itself, and sometimes even the public is interested when emergencies arise which the health and sickness organization of the country cannot meet. Up to date it has been possible in various ways to smooth over, or even to ignore the contradictions contained in our health services, but the war has made it impossible for this complacency to continue. So much for the attitude of the public. That of the doctor can scarcely be given the excuse of naïveté—not that any great attempt is made from within the profession to excuse it at all—and it consists in wrapping up all professional topics in mystery. Every human being who has been sick or has cared for a sick friend must have experienced the exasperation of being left, as far as objective fact goes, without diagnosis or prognosis, to administer a treatment the rationale of which is hidden. At times one has been left to wonder from which side the imitation comes as one reads the windy prognostications of the man with the stethoscope round his neck in the patent medicine advertisements.

The foregoing has not been written to suggest that every name

on the medical register is that of a charlatan—far from it—but the profession has inherited along with other and less cherished traditions an attitude towards professional learning which is definitely medieval. 'Learning is not for the vulgar, the uninitiated could not understand, we have the only road to the truth, everybody outside our craft is wrong': these are the cries of the dogmatic theologian of the days of Abélard. Today they are shared in identical sense, but with a varying refinement, by the vendor of quack remedies and by his arch-enemy, the orthodox middle-class general practitioner. A paradox which repays study.

The interaction of the attitude of the medical profession and that of the public which it serves must in some way be expressed in the fact that more patent medicine is consumed per head in Great Britain than anywhere else in the world. Its manufacture and advertisement is a major industry. Various vicious practices are described as typically English, but in my view *le vice anglais* is most certainly and typically self-medication.

There has been sufficient comment from G. B. Shaw onwards on the doctors' vested interest in disease. Most doctors would define their task as consisting in the cure of sick individuals. Some doctors (Harley Street) have got it worked down finer than that and only attempt to cure certain parts of certain sick individuals—specialization. Emphasis on the maintenance of health or on health as a positive quality, something more than the mere absence of manifest disease, is not conspicuous in medical circles. Only in the ripper years between the baronetcy and death can the successful doctor afford to talk about health or suggest that the general level of health in the community is a thing in which the profession has a special responsibility. During his more active period the doctor under the present dispensation is entirely engrossed in individuals and there is a consequent dissociation from social problems. In no profession is the fear of 'politics' more marked, and that label is held to cover an amazingly broad field. I once felt when working in a large general hospital that anything that could not be contained in a bottle must be political.

Against this background the examination of existing medical services ceases to be a mere cataloguing of facilities for treating the sick. Medicine has too long been taken for granted and for far too long its organization (with its sad analogy to that of the corporative state) has been left outside public control. The result is

inevitably degrading and cannot just be written off by complying with the mystery fetish of indifferent doctors.

By far the greater proportion of the medical work of the country is done by the general practitioner. The initials G.P. can serve to cover almost anything from real professional skill and complete unselfishness down to the most sordid incompetency. The really distressing thing about this form of medical work (from everyone's point of view) is the necessity of making a living out of it. General practice is a poor proposition from both a commercial and a clinical standpoint. This is not at all surprising considering its basis: a young man qualifies, his parents having already spent about £2,000 on him may well have little more to spare; he spends six months getting his hand in while resident at a hospital, and then passes three years as some elder practitioner's assistant. The older doctor sells him the practice and the young successor naturally enough has to borrow and in effect spends the next decade working off the mortgage. All the time he has to think of profit, he can spare no time for study so as to keep abreast with research; he can barely afford a holiday. Anything which threatens the redemption of his mortgage or the expansion of his living he *must* view with suspicion; he therefore dislikes municipal clinics and is inclined to regard any interest by the State in individual medicine as a threat to himself personally. In politics—not a nice subject—he tends to the reactionary ostrich-anglican position and thus obtains some illusion of security. Some twenty thousand medical men are engaged in private practice, and it is to this body of men that nearly all sickness is in the first instance referred. Direct admissions to hospital only occur following collapse or accident in the streets. The main impact of the war upon this group has been greatly to reduce its numbers and thereby greatly to coarsen the mesh of the diagnostic sieve. Symptoms are tolerated for a longer time as the difficulties in obtaining medical help and the wait in the surgery queue increase. As opportunity for infection increases, so the chance of treatment, certainly in private practice, has certainly become less.

If general practice shows a picture of narrowing horizons, something very different has to be said about the hospital scene. On the abolition of the Boards of Guardians in 1929 it became possible for County Councils to acquire workhouse infirmaries and to reorganize them along modern lines as general hospitals. By

1936, 50,073 beds had become available by this means. In London particularly the advance in L.C.C. hospital standards was such as to cause the aristocratic voluntary hospitals to look to their laurels, which they had been a little too inclined to take for granted since they first assumed them.

Voluntary hospitals are one of the incidental anomalies of a social system in which health is regarded more as good fortune than as a right of citizenship. They came into existence either as feudal lazarettes within the charity of the church and Crown, or in the early nineteenth century when they were endowed by wealthy industrialists, and grew up not so much out of benevolence as out of foresight. The success of the industrial revolution depended just as much on the workers having some measure of health as on their receiving some measure of education. So today there is no area which does not depend to some extent for its hospital service upon a Voluntary Hospital which basically is 'supported by voluntary contributions'. Such statements are not accurate, as free treatment is more the exception than the rule; most patients are roughly assessed by the almoner's staff and asked to contribute towards the cost of their treatment.

The work of these semi-charitable institutions is often so ill co-ordinated as to lead to an actual competition for support between separate foundations, each seeking to serve the same community.

Some measure of central control has been achieved by the war. The attack of the Luftwaffe butted through the Emergency Medical Service of the Ministry of Health and has done more to achieve a sane Regionalization in a matter of months than the British Hospitals Association and the Nuffield Trust would probably have achieved in decades.

The question of hospitals is inextricably bound up with the situation of the nursing profession. As long ago as 1930 a grave shortage of nurses was evident and as the shortage leant over into a landslide a commission was established by *The Lancet* to inquire into its causes. They are, in fact, simple in the extreme. Young women who might normally be expected to enter the profession were indulging in a stay-out strike. They were not prepared to tolerate long hours, negligible pay, and confinement during their off-duty in the conventional atmosphere of a Nurses' Home. This latter term being a most curious euphemism which served to cover the most ghastly kind of institutional supervision.

Those who were most fiercely partisan in the defence of the old order proved to be the senior members of the nursing profession itself. These old ladies were bitter in their distrust of their own successors who apparently differed from all their contemporaries in their inability to organize their own lives or indeed to be trusted at the age of twenty with more than twenty-five pounds per year. The sick, on the reckoning of these moribund Nightingales, were better nursed by young female trainees under sweatshop conditions. Not that the veterans actually used such words; rather they admonished their juniors, to quote verbatim the Matron of a famous London hospital, to 'remember you are God's own little gentlewomen', and to at all costs avoid the influence of Trade Union organizations which might seek to put their collective case for better conditions.

Since 1930 a very great deal has been done to improve the conditions under which nurses work, but even today the demand greatly exceeds the number of available volunteers. It is worthy of note that it was the Municipal Hospitals which led the way in breaking down the convent rules. The voluntary hospitals were forced to follow though they have not yet brought themselves to offer their nurses non-resident posts.

Before the war there were only four types of institutions catering for the non-mental sick: Municipal Hospitals, Voluntary Hospitals, non-appropriated Poor-Law Hospitals and private Nursing Homes run for profit. Today each Service has its own hospital system in England where Service sick can get their treatment from doctors and nurses in uniforms of the same colour as their own. The staffing problem has consequently become doubly intensified. Doctors and nurses absorbed from civil practice are compelled by this insistence upon the individuality of the medical service of each branch of the Armed Forces to spend considerable periods of idleness, while those who have not been conscripted are faced with gross overwork and often institutional overcrowding.

Like every other branch of civilized existence medicine depends for its working materials on industry. Quite apart from the specialized trade which caters for the British habit of self-dosing there is manufacturing for orthodox medical practice. The co-ordination of such industries is loose in the extreme and the system of private competition between them does not lead to the

economies of effort and skill which a war situation demands. Today there must be some fifty varieties of aspirin on the market, each identical chemically and in therapeutic action, but every one having its different source and different descriptive literature.

This question of manufacturers' literature is of very genuine importance. It has been remarked earlier that the general practitioner of today has but little opportunity for post-graduate instruction or even adequately to read the professional journals. Every morning at his breakfast he may expect a little haul of samples, the wrapping matter and brochures accompanying which are, perhaps, the best examples of scientific persuasion to be found outside actual hypnotism. It is very largely from the competitive manufacturers that the doctor learns of new drugs, and his knowledge of Medical Progress is in effect filtered through their advertising literature. Certain trade-houses actually publish journals devoted to the boosting of their products and distribute advice of a monopolist nature (interspersed with humorous anecdotes) free to General Practitioners.

The field covered by the medical services is broader than is generally realized. Nothing has yet been said in detail of the service surrounding the 126,769 beds for mental diseases which somehow or other managed even before the war to contain 2,982 patients in excess of this number—sufficient comment in itself on the inadequacy of the provision which wartime evacuation has gravely accentuated. No space has been found in which to treat of research facilities or the teaching institutions where (in 1936) 12,000 future doctors and dentists were learning their job. The yearly four and one-half million pounds spent on tuberculosis can scarcely be said to have controlled the disease, which is not surprising, as its greatest single cause is poverty. Venereal diseases, school medical services, nutrition, employment, the Factory Acts and the Central administrations—they all create problems of their own worthy of separate treatment. There remain the Public Health Services, and secondly, the National Health Insurance Scheme, which must take preference.

In this country the term Public Health as applied to a part of a Local Authority's activity is a little misleading. As has been remarked earlier positive interest in *health* is rare. The care of the Public Health is generally expressed in work directed to prevent (or lessen) the incidence of certain diseases notifiable by law. The

small-pox will keep a Medical Officer of Health awake at night, but who has ever heard of one losing any sleep on account of 'flu, unless he were to have it himself?—it is not notifiable. Such impersonal protective services as the surveyance of drainage plans, the inspection of food, the licensing of certain types of vendors, and the maintenance of a pure atmosphere and water supply form the largest part of the work of a Public Health Department. Stress on the avoidance of gross disease rather than the positive pursuit of health continues in the minimum requirements as to housing. These permit, for example, Mrs. T. to go on paying 5s. 6d. in Arbroath for three rooms to house a family totalling seven and the privilege of sharing a w.c. with twenty-four other people. In practice the law regards a room 10 ft. by 11 ft. as large enough for two—not a high standard. There is only one large scale exception to Public Health's obsession with minimum factors in impersonal environment, and that is in the field of Maternity and Child Welfare. In the larger towns (rural districts lag sadly behind) there exist effective clinics where mothers and children can get more than advice and medicine. These clinics are designed for the purpose of keeping people healthy and are empowered to supply special foods or cooked meals if the case so merits. They represent the only branch of the Public Health Service which really deserves that description, as the emphasis of these clinics is positive.

Fifty million times each year doctors with panels see their patients, who number about eight million. On the whole it is fair to say that both patients and doctors are dissatisfied with the scheme. On the patient's side there can be no more striking illustration of this than the terrific expenditure on patent medicines, which can scarcely be taken as a testimony of faith in the orthodox services. On the doctor's side it is a commonplace to state that the G.P. is overburdened and has not enough time. In illustration it may be stated that as an average he may see twenty patients, at his morning surgery and a further twenty patients in the evening. As a student he was taught that careful examination and consideration of a case could not be achieved in under twenty minutes, which means that this work (only a fraction of his daily task) would take thirteen hours and twenty minutes. Obviously this does not occur and it is compressed into something like four hours. Doctors also have a great deal more to do since the war; not only have many of them been called up but, as Mass-Observation

as recently shown, 21 per cent of the industrial population definitely feels in worse health than before the war. It is interesting to note that this decline is associated with dissatisfaction with work. Those who do not like their work and whose health is in their own estimation worse are 41 per cent of the sample taken. It is under these conditions then that National Health Insurance operates. What is this insurance? It provides for all with an earned income under £420 per annum a free treatment service in sickness. Premium jointly contributed by worker and employer (1s. 6d. per week) are paid to an approved society which in return, after a qualifying period of three months, must provide free qualified medical attention and proper medicines. All this is obtained from doctors who are on the panel, that is to say, who have caused their names to be registered with the Insurance Committee as being prepared to undertake this work in return for a capitation fee (8s. per annum). In addition, the approved society may give its members other benefits out of its accumulated funds, providing, for example, free dentures or convalescence, etc.

There are two main gaps in the National Health Insurance scheme today. The first is that with industrial conscription many new workers, more particularly female, may find themselves away from home and sick and not yet qualified for such attention. Secondly, there is no provision for sickness amongst the dependants of insured persons. This means that though the breadwinner is entitled to panel treatment, any sickness in his family can receive only paid treatment, which either necessitates joining a sick club or the Hospital Saving Association, or running the risk of very grave financial strain. Under these conditions it is not surprising that it is the potential patient who is the loser and much minor sickness goes untreated (except by quack remedies) on the lower income levels. Age on these levels tells more readily, and on an average the working-class housewife of thirty resembles in appearance the average middle-class woman ten years her senior.

* * * *

All that is here recorded is merely a special case of a national complaint. Again and again instances can be cited from the most diverse quarters of some outmoded process continuing, everyone operating it knowing that there are better ways, but no one being prepared to take the initiative and the responsibility of change. Even those who see the situation clearly are the more discouraged

as they continue to work as a part of an organism which refuses in so many ways to adapt itself to the changing needs of environment. Today the constituent parts of society are completely interdependant, and as the general nature of that society changes, so should its organs adapt. It is not only medicine which is showing a check in this process, though it is perhaps the outstanding example of individualism resisting socialization. It is as impossible to expect success from individual medicine as from individual banking, and it is a sad anomaly that so many doctors refuse to see that the national health is a national concern.

Science during the nineteenth century ceased to be the pursuit of gentlemen of leisure with an inquiring turn of mind, and in the great industrial expansion of that time became to a large extent the servant of the manufacturer. Science never became the philosophy of industry—or else we might today be living in a better world. At this time a new concept altogether came into being which was really a reaction to what seemed (and often was) a prostitution of learning. This new concept was labelled 'pure science' and the label still serves today to draw an artificial line between researches in the applied science of art and industry, and the investigations of those who in the eighteenth century would have been called automatically 'natural philosophers'. This distinction is very real, and serious workers have been heard to jeer at colleagues for pursuing an anthropocentric line, a long history of abused confidence having to a large extent made the student of natural philosophy suspicious of all attempts to apply his researches to humanity.

In this way our national culture has become divergent from the strong scientific tradition which was at one time native. This divorcement has also served in a much lesser degree to vitiate the actual work of science. Encouragement can scarcely be felt when the maximum recorded expenditure on research is only .18 per cent of the net product of the industry concerned. The lowest figure available for research expenditure appears to be that of the British colliery owners who could only find £5,030 (.003 per cent of their net product) to spend on scientific investigations into their own work. This retreat from science is shown also in less objective ways: it is quite safe to make your unscrupulous and calculating villain a research chemist of foreign extraction; a comic professor will fill in a dull moment in any vaudeville show,

your forthright middle-aged business man is sometimes heard (correctly) to disclaim any 'fantastic' scientific approach and pin his faith to so-called common sense.

Amongst the various terms of polite disparagement in use in Great Britain today the word 'theoretical' ranks high; so also does the word 'ideal'. A flight from science has led to a disastrous divorcement of practice from theory and in quarters where one would most expect to find a sensitive and adapting accuracy one finds a dogmatic rule-of-thumb that does not even qualify as empiricism. The diagnosis is one of a social schizophrenia which allows an understanding of the accurate ideal to coexist with a babel of clumsy makeshift.

One section of the nation is more surely affected by this split in our culture and, at the same time, is potentially in a very fine position to deal it, viz. the medical profession. Before the industrial revolution the doctor was centrally placed in his community as an arbiter of culture. He had access to everything and influence on everybody. He cannot say the same today. What can be said tomorrow no longer depends on him alone.

However, before medicine will be in a position to assist in the readjustment of scientific thought to national life it will have to put its own house in better order. Briefly the following steps can produce that integration which is today so lacking.

(1) Centralization of *all* Health responsibilities under a single Ministry—the Ministry of Health—and delegation of local work through Regions and the Local Authorities (Counties and County Boroughs) thus providing 'consumer' advice.

(2) Incorporation of private practice within a national scheme. Sickness would cease to be subject to commercial bargaining and the G.P.s work placed within the national machinery of preventive and curative medicine.

(3) All institutions offering treatment to the sick public to be made responsible to that public and not to any charitable trust. Hospitals would be administered within the local (or in special cases national) Health schemes.

The above three points constitute a generally stated demand for complete socialization of the Health Services. This is no Utopian plan to be left for a twilight future but a step which, taken now, would immeasurably aid not only the health level of the community but also the whole economy of the war.

Certain immediate foci of inefficiency demand immediate treatment. For example, the economic position of the nursing profession is such that the nursing care of our wounded and sick is in the hands of sweated labour. The fact that the labour is willing does not make it less sweated. Nor does any amount of 'vocation' whitewash serve to bring in the young women in the numbers or of the educational quality which this profession demands.

The position of medical auxiliaries is full of anomalies. Chiropodists, masseurs, light therapists, medical gymnasts, perform services without which modern medicine could not function, but their status is ill-defined and there is every opportunity for the unqualified to impose upon the public. The inclusion of medical auxiliaries within the national medical service would deprive the charlatan of his foothold.

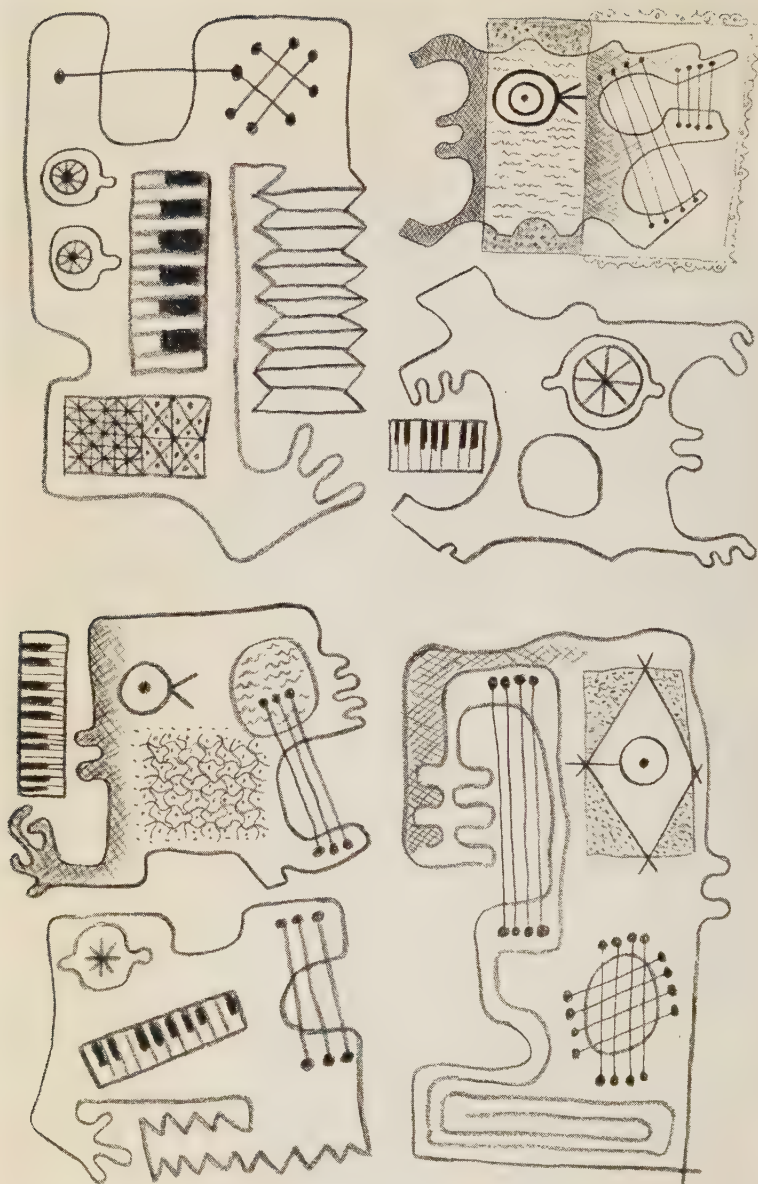
A host of inefficiencies, individually small but with powerful integrated effect exist only through lack of co-ordination at the periphery of the service. For instance, the various sections of a hospital, domestic, nursing, porters, out-patient department, maintenance engineers, surgeons and physicians, live together each very much in their separate world. Hospital work-capacity could be immeasurably heightened were there to be an opportunity for the sections to earn one from the other in a consultative or efficiency committee. The rapid expansion and success of Spanish war hospitals was due largely to such co-operation.

It would be well also to consider whether G.P. organization could stand the added strain of invasion or a great influx of second front wounded filling the hospitals. The organization of an Emergency Domiciliary Service—a flying column of doctors for home treatment—is a problem which should receive instant attention.

It is possible to multiply instances without number. Sufficiency has been said of the health and sickness services of this country to appal a people with less phlegm and even to disquiet a doctor. The words 'planning' and 'reorganization' have steadily acquired a greater significance in the last three years; a significance which derives more from discussion than achievement—at any rate so far as medicine is concerned. A social service which does not adapt to the changing needs of the society it claims to serve is a contradiction in terms and both medicine and society deserve a better fate than that implies.



Infernal Group. Gouache, 1941, by GERALD WILDE



Pianos and Guitars. JOHN BANTING, 1942

ARTHUR KOESTLER

THE YOGI AND THE COMMISSAR

I. THE STATIC SPECTRUM

I LIKE to imagine an instrument which would enable us to break up patterns of social behaviour as the physicist is able to break up a beam of rays. Looking through this sociological spectroscope we would see spread out under the diffraction-grate the rainbow-coloured spectrum of all possible human attitudes to life. The whole distressing muddle would become neat, clear and comprehensive.

On one end of the spectrum, obviously on the infra-red end, we would see the Commissar. The Commissar believes in Change from Without. He believes that all the pests of humanity, including constipation and the Oedipus complex, can and will be cured by Revolution, that is by a radical reorganization of the system of production and distribution of goods; that this end justifies the use of all means, including violence, ruse, treachery and poison; that logical reasoning is an unfailing compass and the Universe a kind of very large clockwork in which a very large number of electrons once set into motion will forever revolve in their predictable orbits; and that whosoever believes in anything else is an escapist. This end of the spectrum has the lowest frequency of vibrations and is, in a way, the coarsest component of the beam; but it conveys the maximum amount of heat.

On the other end of the spectrum, where the waves become so short and high-frequent that the eye no longer sees them, colourless, warmthless but all-penetrating, crouches the yogi, melting away in the ultra-violet. He has no objection to calling the universe a clockwork, but he thinks that it could be called, with about the same amount of truth, a musical-box or a fishpond. He believes that the End is unpredictable and that the Means alone count. He rejects violence under any circumstances. He believes that logical reasoning loses its compass value in the

same degree as the mind approaches the magnetic pole of Truth or the Absolute, which alone matters. He believes that nothing can be improved by exterior organization and everything by the individual effort from within; and that whosoever believes in anything else is an escapist. He believes that the debt-servitude imposed upon the peasants of India by the moneylenders should not be abolished by financial legislation but by spiritual means. He believes that each individual is alone but attached to the all-one by an invisible umbilical cord; that his creative forces, his goodness, trueness and usefulness can alone be nourished by the saps which reach him through this cord; and that his only task during his earthly life is to avoid any action, emotion or thought which might lead to a breaking of the cord. This avoidance has to be maintained by a difficult, elaborate technique, the only kind of technique which he accepts.

Between these two extremes are spread out in a continuous sequence the spectral lines of the more sedate human attitudes. The more we approach its centre, the more the spectrum becomes blurred and woolly. On the other hand, this increase of wool on the naked spectral bodies makes them look more decent and intercourse with them more civilized. You cannot argue with a naked Commissar—he starts at once beating his chest and next he strangles you, whether you be friend or foe, in his deadly embrace. You cannot argue with the ultraviolet skeleton either, because words mean nothing to him. You can argue with post-war-planners, Fabianists, Quakers, Liberals and Philanthropists. But the argument will lead nowhere, for the real issue remains between the Yogi and the Commissar, between the fundamental conceptions of Change from Without and Change from Within.

It is easy to say that all that is wanted is a synthesis—the synthesis between saint and revolutionary; but so far this has never been achieved. What has been achieved are various motley forms of compromise—the blurred intermediary bands of the spectrum—compromise but not synthesis. Apparently the two elements do not mix, and this may be one of the reasons why we have made such a mess of our History.

The reason why a synthesis has so far not been achieved can be given in various terms. What appears as a conflict of principles is very often only a conflict in emphasis, but this does not make the reconciliation easier. The Commissar's emotional energies are

fixed on the relation between individual and society, the Yogi's on the relation between the individual and the universe. Again it is easy to say that all that is wanted is a little mutual effort. One might as well ask a homosexual to make a little effort towards the opposite sex, and vice versa.

But even if the balance of emphasis may be adjusted and a working compromise achieved, the contradiction in *method* remains. Every attempt to achieve an inner change of man by changing the exterior order has so far failed, from Spartacus' Sun State through Inquisition and Reformation to Soviet Russia. This failure seems to be rooted in two disturbing phenomena which Kant could have called the Antinomies of Applied Reasoning. The first is the Antinomy of the Serpentine; the second the Antinomy of the Slopes.

The peak of Utopia is steep; the serpentine-road which leads up to it has many tortuous curves. While you are moving up the road you never face the peak, your direction is the tangent, leading nowhere. If a great mass of people is pushing forward along the serpentine they will, according to the fatal laws of inertia, push off their leader from the road and then follow him, the whole movement flying off at the tangent into the nowhere. That is what happened to most revolutionary movements, where the mass-impulse is strong and the inertia of the mass is converted into a violent centrifugal force. In the more cautious reformist movements, on the other hand, the momentum soon fades out and the ascending spiral first becomes a wiry circling round and round the peak without gaining in height until it finally degenerates into a descending spiral; e.g. the Trade Unionist movement.

The prophets of Change from Within who try to use the vehicle of organized ascent are caught by the antinomy of the serpentine and share the vehicle's fate: either they fly off the road with it—Inquisition; or slide gradually down with it—State Churches in the Liberal era.

The second root of failure is the Antinomy of the Slopes, or of Ends and Means. Either the Means are subordinated to the End, or vice versa. Theoretically you may build up elaborate dialectical, liberal, conventional or religious half-way houses; but if burdened with responsibility, and confronted with a practical decision to take, you have to choose one way or the other. Once you have chosen you are on the slope. If you have chosen to subordinate

the Means to the End, the slope makes you slide down deeper and deeper on a moving carpet of common-sense propositions, for instance: The right of self-defence—the best defence is attack—increase of ruthlessness shortens the struggle, etc. Another well-known slope-pattern starts with the 'Healer's Knife' and ends with the Moscow Purges. The fatal mechanism of this slope was already known to Pascal: 'Man is neither angel nor brute and his misery is that he who would act the angel acts the brute.'

The alternative method has, to our knowledge, only once been tried on a large scale, by Ghandi. His slope started with Satyagraha and gradually made him slide down to his present position of non-violence towards the Japanese aggression: the Japanese might kill a few million Indians but some day they would get tired of it and thus the moral integrity of India would be saved.

Obviously the prospects for the masses of common people are not brighter under this inverted Machiavellianism than under the leadership of the Commissars. One slope leads to the Inquisition and the Purges; the other to passive submission to bayoneting and raping; to villages without sewage, septic childbeds and trachoma. The Yogi and the Commissar may call it quits.

II. THE SPECTRUM IN MOTION

But they don't. Unable to form a synthesis and unsatisfied by the patched-up compromises in the medium bands of the spectrum, they attract and repel each other in rhythmical intervals. This strange minuet is one of the more exciting aspects of History which Marxism, otherwise the most serviceable guide, falls short of explaining.

Under certain historic climates mass-migrations start from one end of the spectrum to the other, general displacements from infra-red to ultra-violet or vice versa, like mighty trade-winds travelling over the seas. The nineteenth century brought such a general displacement towards the Commissar or infra-red end. The present climate favours the opposite direction. Since the early 'thirties we are all travelling, more or less consciously, more or less willingly, towards the ultra-violet end.

The less consciously we drift with the wind the more willingly we do it; the more consciously the less willingly. Personally I belong to the latter type; I wish one could still write an honest infra-red novel without an ultra-violet ending. But one can't,

just as no honest scientist can now publish a book on physics without a metaphysical epilogue, no honest Socialist can write a survey of the Left's defeats without accounting for the irrational factor in mass-psychology. He who clings blindly to the past will be left behind; but he who abandons himself too readily will be carried away like a dry leaf; all one can do is to travel even more consciously and even less willingly.

But again, is such intentional readaptation possible? Are those who survive the great spectral displacements the fittest or merely the glibbest? Thinking of some fellow-writers who achieved the journey from the pink decade to the yogi decade with such monkey-like agility one is tempted to say: Let the dead bury their dead. They answer: But we mean it—and there is no doubt that, at least, they believe that they mean it. Yet what writer has ever written a line without at least meaning to mean it? Hence one first feels disgust with them; then one finds out that one was disgusted for the wrong reasons; and after that one is still disgusted because they were so quick to find the right reasons for their expatriation from the infra-red to the ultra-violet. In these matters clumsiness is respectable and glibness abject. They never seriously attempted to sail against the wind; they abandoned themselves to its first breeze, which broke them gently from their stems, and whirled them round and dropped them gently at the other end; that is perhaps why, when you hear their whisper, it sounds so much like the rattling of dead leaves.

For the political Commissars the spectral displacement has more tragic results than for the arty Commissars. I don't mean that they necessarily feel deeper about it; perhaps it is rather the other way round. In ages of distress when values crumble and survival has an ever so slight but still perceptible touch of glibness and betrayal, artists are often tempted by suicide but rarely commit it, whereas the revolutionary is rarely tempted by suicide, but when it happens he has usually no other choice. In a sense spiritual life can be defined as the training for the acceptance of death; the Commissar is the human type least advanced in this training and yet by force of circumstances most advanced towards its aim. This is the core of the Commissar's tragedy.

Thus the artist shows the least resistance against being carried away; the revolutionary the greatest. Perhaps because the artist *qua* artist has to leave the tap open for those underground

currents which, in times of displacements, inundate the whole vessel and sweep it away, whereas the revolutionary *qua* revolutionary has to keep the tap tightly closed. Indeed the Commissar can be defined as the human type which has completely severed relations to the subconscious. This is the more remarkable as the constant danger under which he lives—I think Lenin used the phrase ‘we are dead men on furlough’—is a constant temptation to communicate with those forbidden zones. In fact he is condemned to live in a permanent state of repressed puberty. While in a normal curriculum the great crisis of adolescence, the confrontation with the tragic and insoluble problems of existence only occurs once—a limited process like teething—the revolutionary spends all his life in this tropical climate and those tragic problems remain his daily bread and butter. The ordinary citizen, once the transcendental teething is over, evolves a smooth *modus vivendi* towards the absolute; the best the Commissar can hope is to find a smooth *modus moriendi*.

Yet though living in a climate of perpetuated adolescence, his behaviour is as unadolescent, unecstatic and unromantic as can be imagined. One has the feeling that his subconscious has been dealt with not on the analyst’s sofa but on the surgeon’s table with the amputating knife. In fact one of his often recurring problems is not to give himself away by sleep-talking or other subconscious automatisms; and if he is a good Commissar he succeeds. He is a marvel of unneurotic repression: one of the most admirable achievements of the human species.

Now if life becomes impossible without pity, it is perhaps equally impossible without a grain of self-pity. The Commissar is not immune against suffering, but what he experiences is more the echo of pain than pain itself, like the aching of an amputated limb. He compels admiration, but also pity, that tender pity which the weak sometimes feel for the strong. Faced with giant figures like Blanqui, Luxemburg, Vera Figner, we can do nothing but shut up and realize what futile, frivolous dwarfs we are; yet pity remains.

That this instinct is justified becomes apparent when the Commissar faces the crisis of his life. This is a tragic and complicated process, often misunderstood. The forms it may take vary individually, but basically it is always the same: it is the revenge of the amputated organ. In a story of Gerard de Nerval’s,

which I remember only vaguely, a judge sentences a thief to have his hand cut off; the amputated hand then pursues the judge and finally strangles him. In the Commissar's case judge and victim are one person and the cut-off organ is not a hand; it is, if we examine it closer, the Yogi's umbilical cord, his means of communication with the Absolute, with the 'Oceanic Feeling' to use Freud's sober term. The Commissar lived in the conviction that it was a luxury-organ, but when the crisis comes he realizes that it is not. The Man-Society connection suddenly proves to be not enough to procure psychic metabolism; the Man-Universe connection has to be re-established.

At this point one of two things might happen. Either the cut connection is re-established, and as an act of atonement the Man-Society connection broken off; this is the classical case of the Revolutionary turning into a Mystic, the total jump from Commissar to Yogi. Or the connection is *not* re-established—then the dead cord coils up and strangles its owner. This is the equally classical case of the ex-revolutionaries whose souls died of suffocation. They might appear as cadaverous as Sinowjew at the Moscow trials; or satanic and cynical like Laval and Doriot; or as impotent and desiccated as the Left party-bureaucracy. Since Rosa Luxembourg there has arisen no man or woman endowed with both the Oceanic feeling and the momentum of action.

Unfortunately we have as yet no scientific terminology to describe these processes, which are of vital importance for the understanding of the 'subjective factor' in History. Hence the more soberly one tries to describe them the more vague imagery one has, *faute de mieux*, to use. The enormous literature of the three main contemporary schools in psychology contains not a single case-history of this non-hysterical conversion, the revolutionary's transformation into a cynic or mystic, whereas history, past and present, abounds in examples. Jung comes nearest to the question: his interpretation of the subconscious bears most resemblance to the 'umbilical cord', but he prefers to study its effects on the most unsuitable human type, the wealthy middle-aged Babitts. And this for good reason: were he to choose his patients among the type which inhabits the German or Russian concentration camps, not only would his therapy prove to be inadequate but he would have to introduce so many new determining factors into his system that both his terminology and his

Weltanschauung would go to blazes. The Commissar's spectral displacements are *terra nova* for the psychologist.

Turning to the more muddled, intermediary bands of the spectrum we find that their reactions to the mystic current are of a very revealing nature. In the pink regions the reaction first manifests itself by an intense consciousness of the Left's serial defeats, of disgust with the old parties, disgust with their worn-out leaders, with plans and promises, ideas and ideals and most of all with one's own foolish and frustrated hopes. This pink hangover is the emotional starting point. Next comes the realization that 'there must have been something basically wrong in our approach to the Masses'. Next to this the discovery that on the very point where they failed—activation of the masses—Fascism was horribly successful. Now the feelings which success inspires in the unsuccessful is envy. If we look at things closely we find indeed that the pink attitude to Fascism is envy rather than hatred.

What we envy we try to imitate. The fascination of Fascism was obviously its emotional, irrational, mystic type of appeal—the ultra-violet component of Fascism. Here the development ends for the moment. It has not gone further yet; but it has gone as far as this. Which proves that in certain constellations the displacement towards the ultra-violet has very dangerous aspects. Those who underestimate this danger—the dangers of the pink hangover—have not realized yet that just as a crowd or mass is more than the sum total of the individuals which compose it, in the same way the constellation 'Left' is more than the sum total of the Left parties, an entity of a higher order with its own laws of movement.

There is one definite profiteer of the spectral displacement: the Scientist. In a certain sense it was he who started the movement; then its momentum carried him further than he probably liked. One should remember that the irrational or ultra-violet element which so strongly taints present-day physics, biology, psychology, was not a philosophical fashion smuggled into the laboratories, but grew out of the laboratories themselves and created the new philosophical climate. The most striking example is the development of physics which was an enormously successful rational Commissar-science up to the closing years of the last century

and has become since more and more of a yogi-science. Matter, substance, time, space, causality, precision of measurement and the belief in the predictability of behaviour of the Measured, have run like sand through the physicist's fingers until nothing remained but a group of formal statements of this type: 'If a small poker-dice is so constructed that we have no reason to assume a preference on its part for falling on the ace-side, then we are entitled to expect that, in the course of a great number of casts, it will show no preference for falling on the ace-side.'

This is undeniably a very precise statement, but one must admit that it is a rather modest one in relation to our hunger for having the mysteries of the Universe explained to us. The modern physicist of course denies that his task should be to 'explain' anything, and he takes a masochistic delight in producing formulæ which establish with precision the degree of unprecision in his statements, i.e. the inadequacy of physics not only to explain, but even to describe what exactly is going on in the physical world. Some time ago Laplace thought that if a superior intelligence counted all atoms and their velocities at a given moment he could predict all future events to the end of the world, including the brand of Mr. Churchill's cigars. Physicists and Philosophers of the last Commissar period tried to jolly around the fatalistic trap of physical determinism, but there was no escape from it. In nineteenth-century physics the world was running down like clockwork without any freedom, except the arbitrariness of the initial state and of the initial choice of a certain set of 'Natural Laws' which governed the mechanism. In twentieth-century physics this initial arbitrariness or freedom is evenly distributed in minute quantities over all possible cross-sections in time and space; the initial creation has become a *creatio continua*. 'Freedom' or 'arbitrariness' are of course merely terms to indicate the presence of factors which cannot be described or accounted for in the physicist's terminology. Nineteenth-century physics describes a sharply defined world with a blurred initial stage; contemporary physics describes an evenly blurred world, like a film with coarse granulation. (The granulation being indicated by the Quantum of Action ' h ' and defined in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.) To describe this world as 'Pantheistic', 'Free', 'Undetermined', 'Statistical', 'Spiritual' or 'Voluntaristic' is more or less a matter of taste.

What really matters is that the physicist's instruments of measurement indicate the presence of physically unmeasurable factors. And this is the reason why the physicist travels perhaps more consciously than anybody else towards the ultra-violet.¹

III. THE PENDULUM

The Commissar, the Artist, the vague Man of Goodwill, the Scientist, not only seem to react in different ways to the great spectral displacement, but their motives for participating in it seem also different in nature. Is there a common reason for this pilgrimage? To a certain extent the revolution in physics has certainly affected the artist, the revolution in psychology has influenced political outlook, and similar cross-influences are easy to discover. They form a pattern of diagonal lines of forces, but this pattern is that of a network, not of a causal chain. There is no causal chain running from Quantum Mechanics to the self-accusations of Bucharin, but in an indirect way they are all linked together by diagonals. We cannot ask for a common reason, we can only ask for a common denominator in the variety of reasons.

In the critical years of the Weimar Republic, when a Communist or Fascist Revolution seemed equally possible and the only impossibility the continuation of the worn-out régime, a certain

¹I am talking of the Scientist, not of the Charlatan. If Commissar-journalese of the C.P. textbook type is bad, Yogi-journalese of the Gerald Heard type is worse. Both discredit the idea they stand for, but while in the first case the defendant may plead that according to his convictions efficient propaganda always includes a certain amount of charlatanism, in the second case this defence cannot be made. Here are a few examples of yogi-journalese:

'Elisha also acts as a telepathic secret-service agent for the king of Israel' (Gerald Heard, *Pain, Sex and Time*, p. 129). 'Moses we know was married. He could not, therefore, have used complete sex sublimation as a technique for enlarging consciousness.' (*Ibid.*, p. 123.) 'Though, therefore, Vajiroli may seem to offer a secondary path to those who say they cannot sublimate, if "Right Contemplation", Samadhi (the words are the same in Pali) non-personal consciousness (ecstasis: $\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$) is not only possible but the actual getting into the next evolutionary stage of consciousness, then surely we must aim at nothing else, and the problem of sex, by this and by this only, finds at last its solution.' (*Ibid.*, p. 229. It is noteworthy that Heard does not explain who or what 'Vajiroli' is; mentions 'Samadhi' only once, on page 214; and Pali not at all; nor does he explain why he prints the Greek for 'ecstasis' in the original.) So much for the form; an analysis of the contents would require more space but lead to equally discouraging results.

Ernst Juenger coined the phrase of the "anti-capitalistic nostalgia of the masses". This vague but violent longing was indeed shared by groups of people of otherwise very different tendencies. Perhaps the common denominator we are looking for can best be described as an 'anti-materialistic nostalgia'. It is idiosyncratic against the rationalism, the shallow optimism, the ruthless logic, the arrogant self-assurance, the Promethean attitude of the nineteenth century; it is attracted by mysticism, romanticism, the irrational ethical values, by mediæval twilight. In short it is moving towards the very things from which the last-but-one great spectral displacement towards the infra-red has moved away. Apparently these movements have a pendular rhythm.

The swinging of this pendulum from rationalistic to romantic periods and back is not contradictory to the conception of a basic dialectic movement of History. They are like the tidal waves on a river which yet flows into the sea. One of the fatal lacunæ in the Marxist interpretation of history is that it was only concerned with the course of the river, not with the waves. The mass-psychological aspect of Nazism is not describable in Marxist terms, in terms of the river's course; we need the tidal waves to account for it. On the other hand our pendulum alone is no guide to history. We must know about the river before we talk of the waves.

Perhaps it is not too hazardous to assume that these pendular changes in the mass-psychological spectrum are a process analogous to the rhythmical change of waking and sleep in the individual. The irrational or romantic periods of mass-psychology are periods of sleep and dream. The dreams are not necessarily peaceful; more often they are nightmares; but without these periodic plunges into the subconscious the vital saps would not be provided for the next wideawake Promethean or Commissar period. Perhaps every Gothic period is followed by a Renaissance period and they are but the succession of yoga-nights and commissar-days in the curriculum of the race. And perhaps this, our present civilization, is not dying, only sleepy.

PETER QUENNEL

ANDRÉ GIDE

CIRCUMSPECT in gesture and grave in utterance, with coat-collar mysteriously turned up and thick eyebrows pulled down towards restlessly observant eyes, M. André Gide is apt to make on the casual votary (who has been escorted by an acquaintance to the great man's table) an impression that is both puzzling and disconcerting. Baudelaire is said to have resembled a *mauvais prêtre*: M. Gide suggests a spoiled priest with something of the schoolmaster. Like a priest's or a pedagogue's, his phrases are carefully chosen. When he speaks in English—which he does deliberately, correctly and unidiomatically—he produces the effect of wishing to convey more than he is ever prepared to state or of attributing perhaps rather too great a degree of acuteness to his admirer's intuition. As I re-read his private journals, his novels and his *soties*, the impression made by M. Gide's personality—almost ten years ago now—is continually coming back. If there is a single theme that runs through his books—or rather if there is a single mood that seems to colour them all—the clue is provided by the word: '*inquiétude*'. Luckily for himself as a literary artist, unluckily no doubt for his contentment as an individual, M. Gide has never been at peace with the world, at ease among accepted beliefs or on particularly good terms with his own exacting conscience. But far from attempting to conceal, or to rationalize, this state of affairs, he has courageously accepted it: he appears to feel that it is a necessary condition of his existence as a writer and to value the special quality that it lends to his style and thought. '*J'ai cultivé mon hystérie avec jouissance et terreur*', records Baudelaire in one of his autobiographical notebooks. So M. Gide has evidently cultivated his peculiar *malaise* and attempted to squeeze out the quintessence of his moral restlessness. A mood, born in the problems of the individual human being, has been re-born in a less impermanent shape on the plane of literature.

M. Gide makes no mystery of the problem's origin. The family from which he descends was Puritanical, Protestant and highly well-intentioned. On to this upright and rugged stock

fate grafted the sensuality and scepticism of an imaginative artist. His Puritan ancestry and Protestant upbringing have made to M. Gide's development a double contribution. Not only have they inculcated that love of order—that scrupulous regard for fine points of style and sentiment—which appears in the construction of all his writings: it has also intensified the drama of his private emotional crises. Thus M. Gide has never quite got over his stupefaction at the discovery that his training and his temperament did not run on parallel and complementary lines. The sensations of mingled delight and horror with which he first recognized his own illicit leanings have never quite deserted him. There are therefore in the pattern of M. Gide's work as it were two lines of feeling and imagination—the straight line (or narrow path) of restraint and rectitude and, woven round it like the serpents round the rod of Hermes, another line, fluid, adventurous, volatile, the line of heart and temperament and poetic sensuality. But, though the wavering line cuts the straight line, it continues to embrace it. Indeed (to vary the image) M. Gide's Puritan background has provided a sort of espalier upon which his pagan impulses, his passionate appreciation of the world that can be seen and touched and tasted, have reached their full literary growth and blossomed in the poetry and comedy of his finest novels and stories. Conspicuous among his early friends was the talented but ill-fated Pierre Louÿs: and had it not been for the support his upbringing afforded, M. Gide's paganism might have followed the same disastrous course and run wild in the same labyrinths of erotic whimsy. But no—merging with the sensualist there was always the schoolmaster and, hovering over the head of the young man who found happiness at last and sensual realization in an African oasis, among ragged Arab shepherd boys whose piping recalled the flutes and the wreaths of Sicily, was another self, if not censorious at least distinctly critical. Had that self been allowed to predominate, M. Gide's poetic gifts might have failed to fructify: had it been absent, their growth and flowering would have been far less regular.

Of the conflict, of its implications and of its effect on his development, M. Gide (I have already suggested) is perfectly well aware. For he is the most self-conscious of writers—not as inferior artists are frequently self-conscious, artists who pay a nervous and irritable regard to the outward manifestations of

their personality, but conscious of the self as the only medium through which he can come into contact with the world around him. Besides, the self is the microcosm of the larger universe: it is the sole fragment of that universe of which we can pretend to speak with anything that approaches definite knowledge: it must be the starting-point of every expedition, spiritual or intellectual. 'Let me understand myself!' M. Gide seems to have prayed. And, though his prayer in the nature of things could not be answered, the effort entailed has brought him numerous rewards, has helped to sharpen his intellect and deepen his sense of mystery. In this connection, one may turn to his admirable foreword to a volume of selections from Montaigne:

To Pilate's cruel question which re-echoes down the ages, Montaigne (he writes) seems to have assumed, though in a quite human and profane manner, and in a very different sense, Christ's Divine answer: 'I am the truth'. That is to say, he thinks he can know nothing *truly* but himself. . . . The knowledge of self seems to him indeed as important as any other. . . . I consider it a mark of great strength in Montaigne that he succeeded in accepting his own inconsistencies and contradictions.

Equally significant is the famous third chapter of *l'Immoraliste*, which begins with the characteristic observation: '*Je vais parler longuement de mon corps*' and proceeds to describe the recovery of the narrator after a serious and exhausting illness, to explain how in the exhilaration of recovering his health he becomes conscious, almost for the first time, of the possibilities of his own organism and to tell of the adventures, some poetic, some catastrophic and absurd, into which this discovery leads him. In form at all events, *l'Immoraliste* is probably M. Gide's most perfect book. Certainly it contains much of his most accomplished prose; and even the reader who loses patience with the slightly stilted protagonist—his heroes are never very sympathetic, since they are always uneasy and restless as in duty bound—must surrender to the verbal fascination of such a passage as the following:

Elle me précéda dans un chemin bizarre et tel que dans aucun pays je n'en vis jamais de pareil. Entre deux assez hauts murs de terre il circule comme indolemment; les formes des jardins que ces hauts murs limitent, l'inclinent à loisir; il se

courbe ou brise sa ligne; dès l'entrée un détour vous perd; on ne sait plus ni d'où l'on vient, ni où l'on va. L'eau fidèle de la rivière suit le sentier, longe un des murs; les murs sont faits avec la terre même de la route, celle de l'oasis entière, une argile rosâtre ou gris tendre, que l'eau rend un peu plus foncée, que le soleil ardent craquelle et qui durcit à la chaleur, mais qui mollit dès la première averse et forme alors un sol plastique où les pieds nus restent inscrits.—Par-dessus les murs, des palmiers. A notre approche, des tourterelles y volèrent. . . .

J'oublais ma fatigue et ma gêne. Je marchais dans une sorte d'extase, d'allégresse silencieuse, d'exaltation des sens et de la chair. A ce moment, des souffles légers s'élevèrent; tous les palmes s'agitèrent et nous vîmes les palmiers les plus hauts s'incliner;—puis l'air redevint calme, et j'entendis distinctment, derrière le mur, un chant de flûte. . . .

L'Immoraliste and *Les Caves du Vatican*, both of which caused a great deal of to-do in right-thinking literary circles, were published during the same period of M. Gide's development. One book is tragic, the other comic; but in each the hobby-horse the novelist bestrides is shaped like a question-mark and the course the story takes is deliberately disturbing. Thus the hero of *Immoraliste* discovers his real self in the physical beatitude that accompanies convalescence. He is invaded by a sudden intoxicating sense of the life he has so nearly lost:

Il était tard déjà; pas un bruit; pas un souffle; l'air même paraissait endormi. A peine, au loin, entendait-on les chiens arabes, qui, comme des chacals, glapissent tout le long de la nuit. Devant moi, la petite cour; la muraille, en face de moi, y portait un pan d'ombre oblique; les palmiers réguliers, sans plus de couleur ni de vie, semblaient immobilisés pour toujours. . . . Je m'épouvantai de ce calme; et brusquement m'envahit de nouveau, comme pour protester, s'affirmer, se désoler dans le silence, le sentiment tragique de ma vie, si violent, douloureux presque, et si impétueux que j'en aurais crié, si j'avais pu crier comme les bêtes. Je pris ma main, je me souviens, ma main gauche dans ma main droite; je voulus la porter à ma tête et le fis. Pourquoi? pour m'affirmer que je vivais et trouver cela admirable.

But gradually from his sense of life, in all its physical richness, develops an appreciation of life in its most brutal, exclusively sensual, aspects; and, when he returns to his house in Normandy, it is to fall in love with the sordid cunning of the poachers who rob his woods, the depravity and squalor of a grasping incestuous peasant family. His wife dies—of the disease that he has passed on to her. He retires to Northern Africa and there abandons himself to the existence of a misogynistic solitary.

The effect of *Les Caves du Vatican*, on the other hand, is as light and irresponsible as that of *l'Immoraliste* is dark and haunted. It is one of modern Europe's great comic novels: but its comedy has an unusually astringent flavour, and the situations it evokes are often extremely cruel. Nothing in their way could be funnier, and yet more painful, than the misadventures of Amédée Fleurissoire when he sets out to rescue the Pope from an imaginary captivity. He is middle-aged: he is ugly and dull: he has the noblest intentions: while the young man to whose Machiavellian cynicism he falls a victim is young, beautiful, intelligent, but utterly devoid of conscience or compunction. He murders Amédée Fleurissoire because (years before Leopold and Loeb, also good-looking and gifted youths) he wishes to commit the perfect crime, a crime without a motive, the legendary *acte gratuit*. Here I must confess that M. Gide's theory of the *acte gratuit*, and much of the discussion to which the theory has given rise, seem to me somewhat puerile, since the crime is not really motiveless but consists of a form of adolescent showing-off, the idea of committing a crime without a motive being, of course, a motive in itself. Nevertheless as a comedy or fantasy the novel is superb. Unlike M. Gide's dithyrambic prose-poems, or *Corydon*, his rather heavily apologetic approach to the problem of homosexuality, this brilliant little narrative shows no sign of 'dating'. Like everything its author has written, it ends on a note that is at once interrogatory and inconclusive.

Here as elsewhere M. Gide gains added strength from the division of his sympathies. He can feel the touching goodness and genuine moral purity of Amédée Fleurissoire (accompanied by a commonplace mind and a hideous body) yet appreciate the pitiless paganism of his youthful murderer. One might add that just as it suits him to be both Puritan and pagan, so he has the great advantage of being in his literary antecedents very much a

Frenchman but also partly English. His indebtedness to English writers—particularly Blake—he has never attempted to conceal; and without Blake—the revolutionary Blake of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, who proclaimed that 'Exuberance is Beauty' and declared that one should 'Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires'—there might have been no *Caves du Vatican*, no *Prométhée Mal Enchaîné*, possibly no *Immoraliste*. . . . I say 'possibly no *Immoraliste*' because, though Blake may have provided a key to the dilemma, the dilemma itself seems to be the author's own. The connection between this novel and M. Gide's autobiography, *Si le Grain ne Meurt*, is very close indeed; and the story of the immoralist's adventures in the oasis is paralleled by M. Gide's account of how he met Oscar Wilde and a companion during a visit to North Africa and of how Wilde, a cynical sorcerer already half-destroyed by the spells he had himself woven and the poetic illusion he had himself created, opened his eyes to the reality of his sexual temperament. On that subject M. Gide has never been reticent and is, at times, almost embarrassingly explicit. He expects from others an equal degree of frankness: and one of the most revelatory passages of his absorbing *Journal* (an extraordinarily interesting yet, as regards any general conclusions or cumulative effect, curiously disappointing work) concerns a meeting with Marcel Proust in which he reproached Proust, very rightly, with having falsified many situations in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* by transposing the sex of his personages:

Nous n'avons, ce soir encore, guère parlée que d'uranisme; il dit se reprocher cette 'indécision' qui l'a fait, pour nourrir la partie hétérosexuelle de son livre, transposer 'à l'ombre des jeunes filles' tout ce que ses souvenirs homosexuels lui proposaient de gracieux, de tendre et de charmant, de sorte qu'il ne lui reste plus pour *Sodome* que du grotesque et de l'abject.

Later, when he read *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, he felt that his gloomiest apprehensions had been realized by the event:

J'ai lu les dernières pages de Proust . . . avec, d'abord, un sursaut d'indignation. Connaissant ce qu'il pense, ce qu'il est, il m'est difficile de voir là autre chose qu'une feinte, qu'un désir de se protéger. . . . Cette offense à la vérité risque de plaire à tous: aux hétérosexuels dont elle justifie les préventions

et flatte les répugnances; aux autres, qui profiteront de l'alibi et de leur peu de ressemblance avec ceux-là qu'il portraiture.

The question of an author's sexual proclivities is, of course, important only as it affects his work; and at every stage of his development his tendencies have played an extremely important part in M. Gide's evolution as a moralist and as a writer. For a moralist, in one sense, he has never ceased to be. What he enjoys he must seek to justify; and, if he cannot justify, he must at least do penance before the world by abandoning all concealment. With an honesty uncommon in this or in any other age imbued with Christian prejudices, he announces that homosexuality is a fact: that what for the average man may be a passing adolescent phase remains for others an emotional obsession of which they can never rid themselves. To regard homosexuality as a deliberate 'perversion' of the sexual instinct is, in many cases, patently absurd: the vengeance of society against the 'pervert' is not unusually as unreasonable as it is ineffective: while to the moral and social pressure under which the homosexual lives may be attributed some of the worst features of the typically uranian temperament.

From these features, it must be admitted, M. Gide's writing has not quite escaped. If *Les Faux Monnayeurs* exemplifies his most brilliant gifts, it also illustrates (I think) a number of his weaknesses. Here he emerges as the twentieth-century Man of Feeling; and, as the sentimental extravagances of the eighteenth century are nowadays unsympathetic or completely ludicrous, so M. Gide's brand of sentimentalism has already begun to fade. An emotional attitude need not be 'sentimental' because we ourselves do not share it: the adjective should be reserved for any delineation of feeling in which the writer seems to us not sufficiently objective, and to have indulged in his own prepossessions rather than attempted to satisfy the requirements of his art. Thus in his description of the relationship of Olivier Molinier and 'l'Oncle Edouard' (a middle-aged writer of considerable distinction who takes a tender interest in his adolescent nephew) the novelist may strike us as somewhat *parti pris*. Naturally, there is no reason why the account of such an association should not be significant and moving. But to write movingly (one may hazard) one should not be moved oneself—or, rather, one's emotions should

have passed through the stage of personal feeling and become associated with emotions of a different order, with the pleasure that he derives from dispassionate observation and literary re-creation. The present age has developed a special type of literary humbug; and, when the history of twentieth-century sentimentalism comes at length to be compiled, high in the list of characteristic scenes and passages will rank the episode of Sarah's seduction by Bernard Profitendieu, contrived through the intervention of her brother Armand.

One's response to this episode does not depend on whether it seems at first sight probable or improbable—and the motives involved heinous or merely ludicrous—but on the atmosphere that it assumes through the author's treatment. There is a *larmoyant* quality about some passages of *Les Faux Monnayeurs*, a feline and evasive touch in others, which may ruffle, if it does not offend, a reader's sensibility. Yet the book is certainly one of the more important products of modern European literature: the device of the novel-within-the-novel (employed so much less successfully in *Point Counterpoint* by Mr. Aldous Huxley) gives the writer scope for many penetrating reflections on the nature of his art: and three of these might be used to sum up any investigation of M. Gide's work and of the temperament that underlies it:

Je me penche vertigineusement (writes Edouard) sur les possibilités de chaque être et pleure tout ce que le couvercle des mœurs atrophie.

Elsewhere:

. . . Il n'est pas de geôle (intellectuelle) dont un vigoureux esprit n'échappe; et rien de ce qui pousse à pousse à la révolte n'est définitivement dangereux. . . .

And finally, as the novelist looks forward along the perspectives of the future:

Quel problèmes (he speculates) inquiéteront demain ceux qui viennent? C'est pour eux que je veux écrire. Fournir un aliment à des curiosités encore indistinctes, satisfaire à des exigences qui ne sont pas encore précisées, de sorte que celui qui n'est aujourd'hui qu'un enfant, demain s'étonne à me rencontrer sur sa route.

ANDRÉ GIDE

IMAGINARY INTERVIEWS

(Concluded)

(Reprinted from *Le Figaro*)

As soon as he came in, he questioned me about popular poetry, blaming me for putting off the subject each visit, so that his readers, as he alleged, were getting impatient, for this subject was of topical value. To listen to him, it sounded as if the poets were awaiting my opinion to direct their muse towards the people or away from them. I was to tell him, all at the same time, if I thought that poetry was to become popular and whether I considered it desirable for it to become so; if poetry was going to draw near to the people or the people near to poetry, and which of the two would derive most advantage from it; for, in fact, wasn't it in this direction that the undoubted poetic renaissance which as a consolation we were lucky enough to witness was evolving? His remarks showed such confusion of thought that, at first, I did not know how to answer him. You would have thought he was the victim of a kind of lyrical delirium.

—We must recognize that, from the beginning of time, the relations between our people and our poetry have been strained, I ventured when he had calmed down a little.

—But surely that could change today? he went on. Cruel disasters have stirred up our nation. The similarity of feelings in misfortune and then in expectation, brings to birth a kind of indivisible spirit in each of us.

—Well, if I may speak frankly, I believe that this kind of unification of minds, which you admire, is far more apparent than real and far more desired than existing. The French, although afflicted by a common misfortune, remain as divided as they ever were.

—If this is true, do you not find it distressing?

—No: we have often been told that the variety of France constitutes its value. May I remind you of those words of Montesquieu which you quoted to me the other day?

—Don't you think that, today, the rôle of a great poet would

be to rally the minds and hearts of all Frenchmen to the same enthusiasm?

—I see what you are coming to: you think that our epoch deserves a new Béranger.

—Oh! we have a right to expect someone better.

—Better? Have you forgotten what Lamartine said about him. He called Béranger 'the fiddler whose each bow-stroke vibrated the hearts of thirty-six million people who were either excited or moved.' It wouldn't have been possible to say as much for Hugo or for Lamartine.

—Béranger was only a satirical writer of songs.

—Indeed, the only kind of lyric really popular with the people is the satirical song, a song which is sung. Do not despise the song. Béranger's are certainly heavy and of a vulgarity which is very offensive when we recollect that some people in the past have wished to recognize in them the voice of the people of France. For shame! It is because of his vulgarity that he could pass as a 'national' figure. But a number of our old songs are exquisite, particularly those by anonymous writers; in them France can be recognized at one and the same time, discreet and fearless, warm-hearted, often solemn but more often smiling, quick to ridicule and gently ironical to the point of tenderness. Apollinaire had a tendency towards popular song as Aragon often has today. And yet for all that real poetry has always, at least to date, been the expression of private personalities, not aimed at the masses, but at private people. Popularity is only obtained by the commonplace. Let me quickly add: in literature.

—And let us also add: in France. For the people of England enjoy Shakespeare; the Russian people Pushkin and Tolstoy; and the Spanish, Cervantès. Villagers in Germany know by heart songs by Goethe and by Schiller; and in Tuscany, people have promised me to let me hear simple peasants reciting verses by Dante.

—Lucky people: lucky poets! Yes, France has always been the country of individualism. On this subject Thierry-Maulnier, in his ample *Introduction à la Poésie Française*, makes several judicious remarks. Take his book, there on my table, and please read me the passages I have underlined. They will elucidate your ideas a little and will, I think, help us to know better what we are talking about.

The book opened of its own accord at page 39 and he read out: 'the French people are one of the first peoples in the world to have a culture, but French writers ask nothing of them, and do not write for them. In the history of French literature there has never been anything similar to the Greek epic, the Greek theatre, the Spanish romancero, the Elizabethan theatre and to this German poetry, widely spread throughout the German people and mixed with their daily life to such a pitch as to inspire the musicians to direct and to condition the rhythm of the marching of their youth.' Yes, in the best terms, it is exactly what I was telling you a moment ago.

—For that reason it seems to you to be correct. However, listen to two small quotations I made a note of, well before the war. The first, by Fénelon, I found in his *Lettre à l'Académie*. Continuing the advice he gives to the poets and having just accused Ronsard of having forced our language by inversions which were too daring and obscure, he writes: 'one should stop as soon as one is not followed by the masses,' and then adds: 'Peculiarity is dangerous in everything'. The second text from Chapelain reveals what minds without great scope, although subtle, shrewd, and widely cultured, might think at this time. I am taking it from a letter written by him to Guez de Balzac in May 1640, which remained unpublished until Sainte-Beuve quoted it in an article on Ronsard in volume XII of the *Causeries de Lundi*. Chapelain, just as Fénelon was to do seventy years later, blames Ronsard for the indiscrete imitation of the old and for the introduction to our language of many borrowed Greek terms, names of gods and of goddesses which he maintains is so much nonsense to the people for whom poetry is made. He says this without insisting on it, not as a bold personal opinion to be readily defended but as a perfectly simple recognized common truth. So you see, the question preoccupying you does not date from today.

—I admit these opinions of Fénelon and Chapelain surprise me. So then the literature of our great classic epoch which might appear to some artificial and deserving the reproach of being removed from life, real life, in order to concern itself solely with the rather artificial existence of leisured people of good society, protected from all other preoccupations but those of the heart and the mind. . . .

—You see this literature was already troubling itself to answer

the needs of a great number and thought that it was fulfilling them; and it was to take the wrong road in that it was still no further followed by the masses.

—How do you explain this illusion? For obviously it is one.

—These two quotations are fairly informative, aren't they? But I do not think there is any possibility of drawing any very bold conclusion from them. But this appears to me the most reasonable one; these words 'people and masses' did not really comprise those that Molière was at that time calling *les honnêtes gens* which means in reality, very few people in comparison to the enormous masses of those who were not even noticed, busy cultivating our fields and about whom culture did not have to worry itself.

—So that what Thierry-Maulnier said still remains, for all that, none the less true?

—But when he goes on. Give me the book. 'In France poetry only attains its white heat and real greatness from the protection of a strange silence, inasmuch as it becomes more profound it stands aloof, its greatest flashes always have something secret, unusual and wild about them. Already by the seventeenth century we can see that there was no lack of good minds to protest against this tendency our literature has always followed. I will not say a tendency towards esotericism, but to over-intellectualize itself and to turn away from life. Thierry-Maulnier defines this very well: 'French poetry,' he says, 'distrusts all raw material and only willingly welcomes things, people and sentiments perfected and ennobled by an already lengthy familiarity with literature.'

—But here and there with a Villon and even with a Ruteboeuf, doesn't a simple and really human emotion break out and express itself directly in music, without having recourse to this concoction of the mind.

—We have to admit that these 'here and theres' are rare enough, any rate until the Romantic epoch, rare to the point of forgiving Thierry-Maulnier for not paying any attention to them, whether it is that he is embarrassed by whatever might contradict his theory, or whether he may have no ear for what is simply emotional and musical. In any case, what he enjoys and praises most is what is most removed from the natural and the spontaneous. Listen: here are two exquisite lines of Maurice Scève, for

which I really believe I would give all the remaining intricate *Délie*. I expect you know them.

Toute douceur d'amour est détrempée
De fiel amer et de mortel venin.

Well! you will look in vain for these two lines amongst the 280 of the *Délie* which are quoted in his anthology. He prefers and presents for our admiration

Tout jugement de cette infinité
Où tout concept se trouve superflu,
Et tout aigu de perspicuité
Ne pourraient joindre au sommet de son plus
Car seulement l'apparent du surplus . . .

And so on in the same strain.

—Now I understand better why neither Verlaine, Moréas nor Jammes feature in his anthology.

—And undoubtedly the reason for his neglect of the whole flight of the Romantics. In this, I think we must see less injustice than insensibility. Until that moment, he was right to say: 'in France a stage in literature is necessary which raises the materials of life and of history, before they can enter the magic circle where their highest fulfilment awaits them, to the dignity of themes.' But it is doubtful whether he has ever read *Expiation* to dare to declare, in confirmation of this: 'Napoleon only inspires Hugo to unbearable remarks.' The truth is that Hugo, in spite of his emphasis, speaks directly about things. And perhaps there lies the most marked characteristics of all the romantic movement. But it is also what Thierry-Maulnier cannot stand. What he likes, the only poetry he understands, is *rechauffé*. This specially and specifically French poetry has, most certainly, shone out from time to time with incomparable brilliance. But, Apollo be thanked, it is not the only kind. In France (so much the better!) there is always and for everything, two poles, two trends, two sides, that of the reflected poetry which means at the same time the poetry of thought and poetry which is reflected as in a mirror, and that of direct poetry; the *Sonnet d'Oronte* and the *Chanson du Roi Henri*. I admit to you that I do not find the *Sonnet d'Oronte* so ridiculous and am readier to prefer it to

Si le roi m'avait donné

Paris sa grand'ville. . . .

which between us isn't up to much. But as admirable as the

successes of cerebral poetry have been in France, I now expect our renaissance to come from direct poetry, from that kind which inspires the poems of *Crève-cœur* to Aragon, whose first writings astonished us, whose following and recent ones pleased us less or not at all, and even dismayed us to the point of believing that he was for ever lost to literature. But he has probably himself recognized his mistake. Yes! we can say that he returns from afar to give us who are hardly dry again from the fight, lines of as fine alloy as these (I am choosing them from many others):

Je cherchais à n'en plus finir
 Cette douleur sans souvenir
 Quand parut l'aube de septembre.
 Mon amour j'étais dans tes bras
 Au dehors quelqu'un murmura
 Une vieille chanson de France
 Mon mal enfin s'est reconnu
 Et son refrain comme un pied nu
 Troubla l'eau verte du silence.

—Now tell me. I believe that you are going to take a holiday.

—Oh, you know, I do not. . . .

—Then I will take one. When I return, I will let you know.

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Having put off indefinitely my holiday, I let him know. He came back.

—Do not insist, I said to him, as he was plying me with questions about current, which means, therefore, untimely affairs. There is a quantity of subjects it is better not to talk about today. I have made up my mind to it: literary affairs will be my only concern with you. I shall not leave them even if I have to disappoint your readers: you can warn them.

—The last book of Chardonne, *Voir la Figure*, comes under the heading of literature: however, it is full of topical interest.

—Yes; but he blows with the wind.

—Won't you consent to discuss it?

—I have read it with keen interest. Certainly, this book does not deserve any of the criticisms I made of the former one: and this is exactly what encourages Chardonne to print as an appendix to this book, my former criticism which he has ceased to deserve. At the time it was not undeserved. But without losing any of

the qualities of his excellent style, Chardonne has established himself. . . .

—It seems to me that your article has reacted on him in the same way as certain chemical reactions form what is called a precipitate.

—His position is similar to Renan's at the time of his *Lettre à Strauss*, immediately after our defeat in '70.

—In his *Reforme intellectuelle et Morale* Renan prints two *Lettres à Strauss*.

—Chardonne contents himself with the first.

—He is younger than you. Surely the indecision you blame him for comes from the fact that he was then going through a period of confusion, self-examination and doubt in which perhaps you are still involved and from which he has now evolved.

—Perhaps not completely; for he admits that a phrase of Renan's 'worries' him. Oh! Chardonne knows his French and this word is exactly the one that suits him.

—Put shortly, the sentence alludes to the great dangers risked by morality and intelligence when humanity is in a certain condition.

—Certainly all the greater in so far as they are 'imperceptible' as you said the other day, and as there would only be a very small number of minds capable of appreciating them.

—And a still smaller number with the courage to recognize them and able to name them. It is in this way that silence has closed down upon dead civilizations.

—Long live our National Revolution which preserves us from such a fate! It allows us to wish and to hope for a general peace-making.

There was silence for a minute. He went on:

—In its appendix Chardonne also reprints, after your article, the attack made against you by Martin du Gard.

—Martin du Gard! You mean Maurice.

—Yes, Maurice. Excuse me.

—In it you can read this noble sentence: 'Old Narcissus (I think he means myself) leans over the eddies of expectation and lies in wait for the drunken whispers of the defenders of the gold-standard . . . and several other kindnesses. But what do you expect? You write as you think. But this need to search for vile

reasons for opinions you do not share is curious. Let us take leave of Maurice, I beg of you, and go back to literature.

—Before leaving, allow me to go back a little. I am not really sure of having understood the kind of dangers Renan speaks about.

—What dangers?

—Those to which, according to him, intelligence and morality would be exposed, in consequence of a general pacification for which we are all hoping, are we not?

—What a pity that you do not see them as it is not my job to point them out to you.

I quickly took leave of him for fear of having to admit that I also could not formulate them exactly. After he had gone, I remained deep in thought and even in bed, repeated over to myself again: happiness, the best in man, the greatest number! The sacrifice of the best in man in order to obtain the happiness of the greatest number. And just as the individual would be absorbed into the mass, I sank into a sleep full of unconsciousness and irresponsibility.

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—Here is a Paris weekly, he said to me. Your friend Léautaud talks about you in it.

—You frighten me.

—Reassure yourself. It is only that, asked by an American magazine to name the twelve books you would take with you to a desert island, your choice should only consist of novels.

—Léautaud is wrong. This inquiry, which I well remember, is French and not American, specified and limited my choice. I had to name the twelve French novels I preferred, or rather those I considered most important in the history of our literature. I replied with comments justifying my choice, which were reprinted, perhaps reprinted by an American magazine. If, by some disaster, I was forced to reduce my library to not more than twelve books, no novel would remain in it. However, I suspect that I would retain *War and Peace* for the subtle reason that, in spite of repeated efforts, I have not yet been able to get any pleasure or real interest out of this large work and that I do not want to give it up.

—At any rate, you have read it?

—Indeed, I have. From cover to cover, when I was young. At

the moment, I am talking about re-reading it. Tolstoy incomparably suggests the past; but this succession of dioramas (I am only thinking of *War and Peace*) where everything is equally illuminated, artless, without shadows, light and shade, plunges me into a deadly boredom. I am making you an admission, an apprehensive admission: but if I think it good during youth to force your admiration without paying too much attention to your own taste, and to learn to like what deserves to be liked and what following your own course you would not like, it is probably not a bad thing, having reached my age, to dare to admit it to yourself and to others; no, all things considered, I decidedly do not like it. And to try to explain why. . .

—That is to confirm the tastes of youth which are first of all quite spontaneous.

—No—or rather not entirely. These youthful tastes have been refined, confirmed and broadened by patient cultivation and comparison. They have even changed. Thus, today, I am passionately fond of Stendhal; but, at first I had to make an effort to like him. He seemed dry to me: I was quite wrong. But, if I had to choose from Stendhal's work, I really believe I would prefer his *Souvenirs d'Egotisme* his *Correspondence* or his *Henry Brulard* to his novels. What he relates in *La Chartreuse* or in *Le Rouge et le Noir* interests me less than his way of telling it or than he does himself. The more he gives himself away, the more he pleases me. For the same reasons, I would give all Flaubert's novels for his letters.

—In short, you consider the novel is of secondary importance?

—Not at all. Flaubert's letters would interest me much less if Flaubert had not been the author of *l'Education Sentimentale* and of *Salammbô*. But I am something of a botanist and look for the explication of the flower in the plant. I have a tendency, perhaps a fault, to interest myself more in the producer, as Valéry does in the recipe, than in the product.

—Would you say the same about Racine's tragedies and his letters to Boileau.

—Perhaps if his letters were more numerous, less reserved; if, like Flaubert, he discussed in them his work and the worries of his job; instead of spreading himself about in the manner of his period, in cringing and politenesses. . . . And then again, no; even then, penetrating the secrets of his art to understand better

how and why he was able to perfect his tragedies and the difficulties he had to triumph over, would, by no means balance the pure joy I experience at each new reading.

—Would Racine's work for the theatre be one of the twelve books you would choose?

—Most certainly. I do not get at all tired of them, whereas I would quickly tire of a novel even if it were the most perfect novel in the world.

—Did you say perfect novel?

—I was wrong, and you are quite right to take me up. The word perfect is particularly unsuitable when applied to a novel. It can only reasonably be used for an object or for a work fulfilling defined requirements. The genus 'novel' has too elastic a shape to aspire to perfection.

—Then what Kléber Haedens says in his *Paradoxe sur le roman* seems fair to you?

—Quite right and well said, but of little importance. These artificial rules Kléber Haedens protests against do not seem to worry contemporary novelists very much. Haedens is right in saying that conforming to these rules does not make a mediocre novelist any better; but it is an easy game to point out that a number of great novelists take no notice of them and that genius cares nothing about them, and that, all things considered, these rules do not exist, or if they do, only in the backward mentality of a few critics.

—By pointing out *Madame Bovary* as the perfect novel Edmond Jaloux, the least old-fashioned of the critics, shows that, for all that, Flaubert has submitted to what he considered to be the laws of the novel.

—These values were by no means pre-established; Flaubert made them and imposed them on himself, while he was writing his book and was quite ready to evade them in order to write *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* or *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. In the same way, without formulating them precisely, Goethe forced strict rules on himself for each of his important works but rules which were inherent in the work and varying according to its character, each work replying to some special summons of his genius. *Goetz von Berlichingen* is achieved in its own way, as are, in a totally different way, *Torquato Tasso*, *Iphigénie*, *Les Affinités Electives* and the first part of *Faust*. As for *Wilhelm Meister* and the second part of

Faust, if it seems inaccurate to apply rules to them, it is because these works belong to a species which floats in limitless space. And I think that the short story almost forms a species of its own since it has to limit itself to the requirements of a magazine or daily paper. It is written to be read immediately at one sitting. As soon as there is a 'to be continued' or as soon as the reader is left in suspense, one is dealing with a novel.

—In such a way that the word perfect, inaccurate when applied to a novel, could apply to a short story?

—In any case, it would be less inconvenient. But it is getting late; we will take up this subject again in the New Year. Let us hope it will be less dark than these two wretched years of disgrace.

—Fortunately, some reassuring gleams are beginning to appear.

—In a tunnel, artificial lighting does its best. Before seeing the real light, I am afraid that we shall have to sink much deeper into the darkness.

Meanwhile let us not lose hope.

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—What you were saying about the novel seems quite right to me and induces me to think that only those works which are addressed to an audience or a group of people gathered together for a certain time, are eligible to constitute a species. I wonder whether the reason why the novel escapes all the rules of a species is not due to the fact that it appeals like a poem to isolated specific people. The question is one of seducing or imposing itself, constantly charming the attention of a reader who takes his time, and who lends himself to the game whenever it pleases him; and it seems to me that it is this factor which accounts for the game having neither rules nor obligations. Before this commodity, the book, was well known, at the time of the rhapsodists, the medieval poets and public recitations, most certainly epic poetry and the epics of the Middle Ages have been a species. But the novel I am reading, sitting in my chair at such moments as I choose, has only to submit itself to rules to which I hold it responsible.

—The species aims at a group: the novel at the individual. Is that it?

—Yes; and after what we have just said about it, it is interesting to notice that the question of the novel is linked to that of individualism. The great producers of the novel are those peoples

where the individual is most distinct from the mass. On the other hand, the type of literature most specifically German is the lyric drama, a synthetic type in which Germany excels and triumphs, in which music and poetry join in such a total effect as flowers in Wagner's Tetralogy; in this, it seems to me, where a whole people gathered together listens religiously and where a real social fusion is attained, it achieves its most perfect expression.

—You say the countries of the novel are those of individualism. What about the Russian novel?

—At first glance it seems as if there were a mistake. However, thinking it over a little, I realize that from the time of the Tsars popular meetings were impossible, for which Dostoiewsky would have written those dramas he talks about in his first letters to his brother. He gave them up, knowing that he could only reach each of his readers separately. Through inspiration, or rather, forced by social upheavals, the Russian novel evolves and, so to speak, disindividualizes itself and aspires to the consent of the community. There Robinson is never alone; he is a group of pioneers.

We were silent for a few moments.

—At first, you were probably thinking of England when you were speaking of the real countries of the novel. The Elizabethan dramatists, however . . .

—Oh, how you embarrass me. I am not supporting a thesis.

—I believe this particular example would only confirm it. In England, the dramatists preceded the novelists. The theatre only flourished among a unanimous people. With *Paradise Lost* the novel was born, after the revolts and religious dissensions favoured by the Reformation, mother of individualism. Cromwell emptied the theatre, scattered the spectators, broke the masses for the profit of private people. Milton's poem addresses itself to each one of them—that is why I speak of it as a novel: nothing could be less suitable for crowds, and there is nothing written which is better read from an armchair, it seems to me. What do you think about it?

—Nothing so far. I would need to think about it. It wouldn't be the first time that I was more correct than I had at first thought I was; in any case, I thank you for agreeing with me.

—Did you read in *Le Figaro* Thierry-Maulnier's controversy about our debate on poetry?

—Certainly I did: and I very much appreciate the considerate

attitude. A discussion of this kind can be very profitable whenever each of the participants is not trying to injure the other and to master him. Thierry-Maulnier's arguments are reassuringly loyal and induce us more to reflection than to fighting. The fact that he and I are not looking for the same kind of delight and pleasure is what allows us both to agree on certain points; those where thought, by means of poetry, becomes musical. And these points of contact are not so rare as I might have supposed. But it would be a good thing for us to understand each other about this word 'musical'. The word lends itself to interpretation, and first it is better to define it so as to prevent Thierry-Maulnier saying: 'Who wants music has only to ask music for it.' The musical quality of a line has nothing to do with so-called music, based on a tone-scale and nothing in common with song. I call music, in this respect, a combination of proportion and sonority, of emotion and thought of which a short poem of Valéry gives us such a very excellent example that I cannot restrain myself from quoting it (from its first version which I prefer to the definitive one he published later):

O Courbes, méandre,
 Secrets du menteur
 Est-il art plus tendre
 Que cette lenteur?

Je sais où je vais
 Laisse toi conduire
 Mon dessein mauvais
 N'est pas de te nuire . . .

Bien que souriante
 En toute fierté
 Tant de liberté
 Te désorienté?

O Courbes, méandre,
 Secrets du menteur
 Je veux faire attendre
 Le mot le plus tendre.

—I understand. And listen: What pleasure it gives me to find

among the rare lines of Victor Hugo which find favour with Thierry-Maulnier, this admirable alexandrine.

O Seigneur! ouvrez-moi les portes de la nuit

I am sorry to see it separated by Thierry-Maulnier from the following line which is alive with the same musical breath and without which the first seems to me to stop midway in its perfect curve:

Afin que je m'en aille et que je disparaisse.

—You are right. Isn't it just this musical quality that we like in Racine's lines and that we so rarely find in even the most beautiful of Corneille's?

—What is more musical than the few lines of *La Légende des Siècles* which follows the mediocre and well-known *Chanson d'Eviradnus*:

La mélodie encor quelques instants se traîne
Sous les arbres bleuis par la lune sereine
Puis tremble, puis expire, et la voix qui chantait
S'éteint comme un oiseau se pose: tout se tait.

—On the other hand, what could be less musical than Musset's lines in spite of the fact that they are about music:

Harmonie! Harmonie!
Langue que pour l'amour inventa le génie
Qui nous vint d'Italie et qui lui vint des cieux.

—I have quoted from memory having hardly any books here. Your readers will excuse me if I have made a few slips.

* * *

—On your last visit, I said to him, your remarks occasionally surprised me.

—But I thought that I said nothing but what you were going to say yourself.

—Perhaps; but you said it before I did.

—I was more assured as I got to know my job. In an interview I agree or contradict you, suiting the situation, in order to bring out your thoughts.

—Latterly you were mostly in agreement with me.

—In front of you, I keep myself in the background, to the best of my ability; I become a mirror. I go so far as to imitate your ways of speaking, your own tendencies; oh! in spite of myself. That is 'déformation professionnelle'. Once alone, I pull myself together and regain self-control just as I think an actor does when

he leaves the stage. But an actor, in laying aside the hero of the theatre to become himself again, falls from a height. Whereas I, whom you seem to imagine suitable to ask you questions and collect your answers. . . . First may I tell you that I am not the person you think I am. I am his brother. It is odd what little importance a person's age has for you! Fernandez is quite right to say that you have no historical sense. The interviewer who came to see you in 1905, although already younger than you, was twenty years older than I. That is to say, that at that time, I had just been born. Would you like to know who I am? Perhaps I am that two hundred and first or second person on whom you base the future of poetry in France.

—Are you a poet?

—And I trembled with hope when I heard you say, the other day, that you would reserve the prize for the person who would know how to wait. What else have I done, to the present day, except wait, maturing in silence? But I feel that I shall not be able to keep silent much longer.

—A poet's poet?

—Rather a novelist-poet. Just the kind that Kléber Haedens advocates. Yes, I entirely agreed with you when you were talking about the novel having no rules and consequently not being a type; having no rules because it is meant for its isolated readers. But limitless possibilities given us by this false medium could, I think, be far better exploited than they have been up to the present time.

Now he was off. I only had to let him talk.

—‘To be in competition with civic status.’ What nonsense! The rôle of art is not that of a mirror. César Birotteau does not interest us at all in reality; and the plain reflection of a Birotteau would not deserve to claim our attention. The picture Balzac makes of him only holds our attention in so far as it differs from the model and in so far as Balzac sacrifices him to his art. Art only begins with the getting rid of nature. The important thing to understand is that the artist arbitrarily lays out forms and colours. But he hardly begins to know it himself. I admit, that, as a novelist, I am not at all obsessed with reality any more than the painter, who puts one colour which pleases him next to another without caring whether nature prescribes it or not. For instance, a purple sea underneath an orange sky, or *vice-versa*.

This is why Lautréamont is not afraid to talk about 'le rubis du champagne'.

—I would advise your painter only to change to his taste the colours of those objects which are at least recognizable by their shape. A sky or a sea without any outlines do not seem to me very well chosen. No one will be able to understand anything about them.

But immediately I reproached myself with my Prudhomme-like remark. I read the contempt in the look he gave me while he said that we could never understand each other and that certainly a gulf separated us. Now I have a particular horror of gulfs. I felt that I was capable of understanding my interviewer even when he thought he differed most from me. Besides the ideas he was expressing seemed to me more confused than new, and the gap between us imaginary. To conciliate him I started again, as you might throw across a bridge.

—Look, I have here a small picture by Derain which I find delightful. I can see very well that it represents, or rather suggests, a beach on which a wave, a cliff and a tar-coloured sky all converge. In what consists the powerful and obvious charm of this picture?

—In its colour, the weight of those shapes, in the substance of the paint? The atmosphere is unbreatheable; you could not sail on the sea nor venture on the beach. If you could find that in nature, you would die of horror. And yet . . . it is thanks to some connection with our sky, with the real sea and a real cliff that this picture owes its existence, its composition, and its life.

—But the power it has to evoke pleasure comes precisely from the remarkable difference between the subject described and the painting which describes it.

—Yes; and from the energy which surmounts this difference; a little less difference and we would not be charmed any more; a little more and the spell would be broken. This charm would not exist if the picture was too like reality; and would be broken if it ceased to evoke it. I think it is the same for the novelist. Nature and reality offer him the elements which he makes use of. You cannot do without them.

He showed a certain amount of impatience and said:

—I think that what ties the novel to apron-strings is the fact that it attaches itself, and you will jump, if no longer to obsolete rules, at least, to characters.

—It is quite enough for me to be told that I am going to jump for me not to do so. But go on: so we are to have no more characters.

—Of course we will; but we must not attach ourselves to them; and not follow them. What I would like to follow is the effect of a phrase or a gesture on characters whom, in turns, one meets and takes leave of. You will allow, won't you, that a sentence, casually overheard, can tragically alter the fate of whoever it may be. . . . For instance, 'Great Pan is dead'. This terrible news, announced by whoever it may be, circulates; it changes everything on its way and nothing can stop it any more.

—I think I see what you mean. But if you do not fix the reader's interest on anything, it will take leave of you. Round what will you form and concentrate your action?

—Who is talking about action? I said to you, a phrase, a word. Listen to this: What is more important, more tragic, than the 'Eppur si muove' of Galileo? It is the expression of a hitherto unknown truth, which slowly establishes itself and invades the world. The earth did not need Galileo to turn; but no one knew that it did turn, and religion and the civilization of the whole world at that time were based on the false truth that the earth was a fixed point; and this universal belief was enough to fix this point. 'The world turns' upset everyone. The church wavered, tottered on its foundations. Everything had to be put back on a new foundation in this world which was rotating from now on. But before things were re-established, everything seemed compromised, lost.

—It is the same thing with some bases which seem to be indispensable. We believe that everything is lost when they are no longer there. I admire everything the body and mind of man can do without.

—Doesn't that seem an immense topic to you?

—A limitless one; and it is even why, in your place, I should mistrust it. The infinite is the dreamer's paradise.

At this, he got restive:

—Excuse me. I believe that you do not understand what I mean. You are probably taking me for an impenitent romantic of such a kind as: 'Je ne puis. Malgré moi l'infini me tourmente.'

But, of course, I know very well that you do nothing of any value whether in art or in life, when in this kind of mood. But I already regret having spoken to you.

—Don't regret it, for I have listened very carefully and have understood better than you might believe. May I ask if you have got very far with your book?

—I have written nothing as yet. But it is all there in my head.

—Then do not delay gathering it together. What you have told me about it has interested me enormously; I would like to know more. But now you are going to leave me. Do not return before February. I need a fortnight to finish the preface promised the *Pléiade* for Goethe's Plays; the book is ready and is only awaiting the preface to appear. The Infinite . . . do you know that that is exactly the drama of Goethe? His constant and secret drama: the struggle against the Infinite in which he is involved by his too broad and too universal genius, whereas he feels and knows that the work of art to begin to possess its own life, necessarily admits of both limitations and concentration; neither of which is attained without sacrifices.

And then, between us, please stop believing in gaps. If you, I mean your generation, go any further forward than we have been able to go, so much the better, but remember that it is all on the same road; whither my good wishes and my hopes will follow you, even if they have not preceded you.

(Translated by Peter Watson)

AJIT MOOKERJEE

KALIGHAT FOLK PAINTERS

IN the eighteenth century India had reached the depths of political and cultural exhaustion. The Indian aristocracy was in full decay, and the most selfish kind of individualism was rampant. Public life had been reduced to systematic pillage, and the distress of the masses was a direct consequence of the increasing luxury of the Court and other centres of power, and of their extravagant expenditure on all kind of luxury and refinement.

The characteristic refinement of the time was extremely artificial and had no roots in everyday life. The cult of beauty, 'art for art's sake', was practised as a form of escapism. All interest centred round the feminine theme, which was endlessly repeated in both painting and poetry, in erotic sentimental

romances, and fictitious portraits of Sultanas, Begams and Ranis. They were dream-figures of idealized feminine beauty and accomplishment, delicately made up, decked out in the finest dresses, and overloaded with jewellery. This cult resembled the cult of the ballerina in the France of the Roccoco period, when kings and princes lay at the feet of adored *divinas*.

But out of the dead remains of these Court splendours there finally arose a cultural awakening of the Indian masses. A significant part in this was played by the Kalighat folk-painters of South Calcutta, whose work makes a sharp contrast with the other Indian painting of the time and links up India with popular art and literature in other parts of the world. The Kalighat artists expressed the increasing consciousness of the Indian masses of their period. They also helped the growth of this consciousness by taking the common people as their basic theme. For the first time these folk-painters became aware of their condition, brutalized and crushed as they were by the existing social system. And along with this fundamental change of attitude, their style and subject-matter also underwent a transformation.

A large number of newly-discovered folk-paintings portray the real conditions of the common people's life at that time, and every one of these paintings is a condemnation of the idealistic view of life. Even the powerful gods and goddesses of bygone days are represented as trembling before men, ready to do the bidding of the peasant, ploughing his field, harvesting his crop and carrying it away to his home. At the bottom of each scroll there are always scenes of Hell depicting every imaginable torture, to which moneylenders, landlords and princes are being subjected as punishment for their worldly sins. These tortures are invariably presided over by skeleton figures in the background who represent the starved and oppressed members of society. In order to leave no doubt in the popular mind about the real meaning of these paintings, explanatory songs composed by the artists themselves always accompanied the public unrolling of the scrolls. Art had ceased to be mystical and become a form of revenge for social injustice.

This accounts for the unflinching realism and the profound truthfulness of the Kalighat paintings. Their usual themes are street scenes, popular amusements, festivals, family reunions and the joys and sorrows of everyday life, together with biting



Neglected wife falls asleep after waiting for her Westernised husband



Female ascendency within the home symbolised by picture of wife leading her now sheepish Westernised husband (wearing European hat) on a string



Satire of religious hypocrisy. A bird defiles the head of the 'pious' mendicant

satires on the vices of the decaying social order. Each theme—for example, drunkenness, prostitution, domestic quarrels or religious hypocrisy—is developed in short sequences ranging from playful satire to a *macabre* climax. Apart from its simple technique and the successful communication that this results in, Kalighat art, by its nature and function, has useful lessons for creative artists in search of basic forms. In the first place, it is frankly commercial, answering a real demand of the people. It appeals directly to the eye, without any kind of subterfuge or detour. Secondly, it avoids the vague fantasy which had been evolved in Indian iconography and which had led to the betrayal of fundamental form. Moreover, Kalighat pictures were collective creations, the product of several members of a family with generations of innovators and discoverers behind them. The sense of the whole is always present in the minds of the artists and each is responsible to his fellow workers and not to any artificial criteria established by critics and snobs. The result is significant line, well-sustained rhythm of spatial relations, and bold colouring.

The best specimens of Kalighat art are black-and-white paintings drawn with joyous, impetuous lines. The rhythm reveals an amazing economy, which is strongly individual and is reminiscent of the modernistic paintings of Europe. In a later period, under the impact of English influence, the Kalighat shop-studios became the pictorial news-centres of Calcutta. Caricatures of English dress and of the habits of the Indian bourgeoisie were drawn in large numbers and sold to visitors to Calcutta. Many of these early paintings of the Kalighat school were eagerly sought after by the Anglo-Indians of those days and became treasured possessions in English homes. But these painters are no longer to be found in their old haunts, for, taking advantage of the popularity of their work, German lithograph imitations on glazed paper, at cheap prices, ultimately flooded the market. The gradual rise of the Bengali bourgeoisie gave a final blow to Kalighat art. The paintings of Kalighat have entirely disappeared and the last representatives of the Kalighat school are now dead.

Nevertheless, Kalighat tradition still persists and has influenced the art of Jamini Roy, the leading modern Indian artist. From the ingenious use of clear-cut lines and simple colours, it is obvious that Roy has completely mastered the Kalighat technique, so dear to all creative revolutionary artists.

FRANZ BORKENAU

SOREL, PARETO, SPENGLER

THREE FASCIST PHILOSOPHERS

THE term 'Fascist', which is used above as the common denominator of these three remarkable sociologists, is not simply meant as a term of abuse. I believe that two at least of the three, Sorel and Spengler, have made contributions of value to modern thought. Nor would I contend that what is valuable in them has nothing to do with their rôle as pace-makers for Fascism. The situation is more complex than that. The best in them is very closely connected with the worst.

Georges Sorel, the interpreter of the doctrine of French syndicalism, who died shortly after the last war, has been an immensely productive writer, but outside France he is best known as the author of *Reflexions on violence*. He has also contributed a study on the 'Illusion of progress', which is not on a level with the best he wrote, yet important as giving a wider, more philosophical background to his doctrine of violence. The two titles give clear enough an indication of his philosophy, a clearer one perhaps than his actual writings, which are marred by a *gaucherie* of presentation most unusual for a Frenchman.

Vilfredo Pareto, originally an Italian railway director of liberal background and views, was driven out of Italy owing to his struggle against financial and political corruption. He ended his days as a professor of Economics at Lausanne, bitterly hostile to that liberal régime which had treated him so badly. His only contribution to political doctrine is contained in his *General Sociology*, a work of enormous size and, like Sorel's works, of very muddled composition. There is, however, this excuse that Pareto was nearly an octogenarian when he wrote it. The main doctrine of the 'Sociology' is in keeping with that of Sorel. It is directed against humanitarianism, democracy and liberalism and extols all the attitudes opposed to them. He died in 1923.

Oswald Spengler, who, before his book had made him a rich man, had been a modest teacher of mathematics at Hamburg,

comes into a different category. He died, not an old man, in 1935, thus belonging to a much younger generation. Accordingly he is much less interested in 'absolute values' than either Sorel or even Pareto. There is no need to indicate the well-known main doctrines of *The Decline of the West*. Though Spengler does not believe in absolute values, he is as hostile to the values of the liberal age as his French and Italian counterparts.

Neither of the three was the propagandist of an existing Fascist régime. Sorel just lived to see, not the Fascist but the Bolshevik revolution, and what, I believe, was his last utterance in print is devoted to a 'defence of Lenin'. It is, however, a defence Lenin would hardly have accepted. The most praiseworthy thing in Lenin, in Sorel's eyes, was that Lenin was 'a true Muscovite' who had broken with the Westernizing traditions of Peter the Great, and with the Western traditions of humanity and democracy. The class angle of Lenin's work is hardly mentioned at all. Pareto, after having prophesied, in 1919, an age of dictatorship of the trade unions, just lived to see Mussolini come to power. He applauded his anti-democratic work, but maintained an attitude of reserve, refusing a State appointment offered him. Spengler just lived to see Hitler come into power, and loathed him and his lot with all the hatred his strong soul was capable of. He hated in Nazism those aspects which H. Rauschning has conveyed so vividly to an international public, and he hated them for the same reasons Rauschning hates them. As strong conservatives of the Prussian type both find Nazism much too demagogic, corrupt and unsteady. They have no use for the Dervish-like homage paid to the Fuehrer. Similarly Pareto had summoned Mussolini not to tamper with the liberty of the universities, so that a place of free criticism and research should remain intact.

Even these sketchy remarks should make it clear that a close parallelism exists between the Frenchman, the German and the Italian, all of them typical representatives of an age moving away from the ideals of the nineteenth century, closely similar in their views, expressive of a wide current of opinion in their respective countries. Instead of Sorel, Pareto and Spengler, I might have dealt with Bergson, Michels and Ernst Jeunger; or with Maurras, Mosca and Moeller van den Bruck. I selected these three, not owing to any uniqueness of their views, but owing to the high level on which they conduct their argument; not, however, with

any intention to disparage the importance of others thinking on similar lines, *e.g.* Bergson. These three offer a good starting point for a discussion of the intellectual side of the movement towards Fascism.

'Fascism', after all, is only an almost meaningless term used in self-description by a movement which preferred not to mention its real aims. The scientific term for that movement is 'totalitarianism', for it is the totalitarian state which has been the real goal of the movement. Now it is remarkable to the highest degree that, whatever prophetic gift our three typical proto-fascists may have displayed in other respects, they are all three of them conspicuous in their failure to foresee the totalitarian state. But 'failure to foresee' is putting it much too mildly. In fact they are all conspicuous by their hatred of the totalitarian idea. What Spengler loathed in Nazism was something closely connected with the process of 'Gleichschaltung'. He believed in the superlative value, the indispensable need for the old German ruling groups, the traditional officers' corps, the Civil Service, the industrial and financial captains with whom, since he had become famous, he was connected by so many ties of friendship. *Years of decision*, his last work, is full of apprehension about the inevitable consequences of the submerging of these keepers of old values by the Nazi flood of uncouth, untrained, neurotic, uncontrolled lower middle-class boys. Adventurers, he would say, are no good in the great moments of history; if huge numbers of them crush everybody who has kept a sense of responsibility, disaster is inevitable. The reservations of Pareto in front of the rise of Fascism are fundamentally of the same kind, and if they were of a milder sort, it was only because Italian Fascism was a much milder affair, and in many respects so much more closely connected with the old ruling classes than Nazism.

The case of Sorel is much more glaring. His doctrine not only does imply opposition to the totalitarian idea, it is even its diametrical opposite. For the main idea of the *Defence of Violence* is this, that a society, in order to have vitality, must be split by the most violent antagonisms. His defence of violence deals, in the first place, with violence as used in the modern class-struggle by the proletariat. His whole argument is directed against Jaurès, against democratic reformism, and it is Marx he invokes as chief witness in his case. Yet Marx would probably have been

as little delighted with Sorel's arguments as Lenin later. For the usual arguments of revolutionary Marxists—that reformism and class co-operation are unable to bring about Socialism, and that proletarian revolution is the necessary outcome of inexorable historical laws—are not even mentioned by Sorel, for the simple reason that he is not interested in Socialism, and does not believe in historical necessity. The worst type of economic organization, according to him, is a society where the State, ruled by a political party, attempts to manage economic life. The efforts of Jaurès tend in this direction—which after all, had Sorel not been so incredibly muddle-headed, he would have seen to mean no more than that Jaurès was a Democratic Socialist—and therefore tend towards a state of things where every individual, through the means of the State, will be plundered by a gang of politicians. Such a development is perfectly possible, and precisely for that reason horribly dangerous. To proclaim such opinions as Marxist is exquisite fun. But more exquisite fun it is to follow Sorel as he concludes, from these premises, that the only protection against that abomination for which he has no name, but which ordinary humans call Socialism is—the class-struggle. That, according to Sorel, is the profound truth which Marx has developed.

But one must be beware from discounting the value of a doctrine, merely because it contains elements of unintended humour. The funny thing about Sorel is merely that for a long time, though not till the end, he continued to regard himself as a Socialist and a Marxist. Shorn of this nonsense—which reveals a weak personality combined with a strong mind, a man able to see things, but afraid of proclaiming openly the novelty of his views—his doctrine has meaning. What he maintains is that in two important directions all State interference threatens social disruption. Economically, it produces a tendency to rely upon political intrigue instead of honest effort for gain, a point also very strongly urged by Pareto; and morally, by establishing the paternal control of the State over contending pressure groups, it takes away all vigour otherwise created by the struggle of these pressure groups. The first is not much more than the economic doctrine of liberalism. The second is not much more than the political doctrine of Machiavelli who, in his *Florentine History*, maintained that the greatness of his native city was, in the first place, due to constant civil war, and, in the second place, to the

poverty of its inhabitants. 'The city became rich, while its citizens were poor.' Our Neo-Machiavelli takes pains to describe the corruption of contemporary France, the cowardice bred in bourgeoisie and proletariat alike by the fear of struggle, the preference for easy compromise, the belief in happiness and progress. What, therefore, is the chief value of the hoped-for intensification of the class-struggle in Sorel's eyes? It is that the bourgeoisie, by the outrages of proletarian violence, will be forced away from its habits of compromise, will give up its bad conscience in the matter of exploitation, will learn to fight back ruthlessly, will become a class again instead of a crowd of fortune-hunters, will develop habits of ruthless vigour and hence, together with the equally vigorous and ruthless proletariat, will save the country.

Sorel is always paradoxical to the point of being scurrilous, and I should not recommend his interpretation of the class-struggle. But it is obvious enough that in this doctrine it is not really the class-struggle that matters in the first place. What Sorel is groping for is obvious to us today. He tries to develop a formula which would express and explain the origins of the moral decay into which, he feels, modern European society, and in particular French society, is rapidly falling. Today we all know how much truth there was in these views, how much there still is in them. It is certainly not true that compromise as such is an evil, as he would like us to believe. But there is compromise and compromise. Compromise as a method of settling, in a well-mannered and reasonable way, matters of secondary importance, is a mark of civilized society. Compromise as something absolutely preferable to fighting, such as we have lived through during the humiliating years between 1918 and 1940, is conducive to complete disintegration of society. Was Sorel wrong in maintaining that the political methods of his era were likely to breed just such a spirit in both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat? Humaneness is a mark of civilization as long as it means not hating people as criminals, whereas in fact they are madmen, not believing in the superlative educational value of a good hiding, and not to imagine that a bit of terrorism is the most obvious first thing to do when confronted with a political problem. But if it extends to the point where inflicting pain (and by implication also suffering pain) is the worst of all evils, and where nothing is regarded as more

important than to preserve life, it is the last stage before the end. A society is vital precisely to the extent it believes there are many things more important than the preservation of life. The supplanting of physical violence by peaceful means of action is a mark of civilization. But if this goes so far as to breed an attitude where direct aggression is viewed with horror, while the worst forms of indirect cruelty are easily condoned, and where intrigue generally supplants more direct forms of action, it is the beginning of the end.

Here is the root of Sorel's problem—and it is not an imaginary problem at all. It is also Pareto's problem. The difference between them is a difference of method. Sorel handles his problem, in the first place, as a problem of political morality. He makes injunctions, develops a programme, not of political and economic transformation, but of moral recovery to be brought about by a new fierceness of the class-struggle. Pareto sees the problem, but no longer takes sides distinctly. Though all his instincts are on the side of fierceness (of what, in his queer enough terminology, he calls 'Residue II') he nevertheless admits that there are certain things, economic prosperity being among them, which are spread by cleverness, adaptability and peaceful methods. Hence he interprets historical development as a cycle, where fierceness and shrewdness, conservatism and desire of change, alternate. Periods of shrewd adaptability create wealth, but they contain an element of disintegration which inevitably leads to their end. Periods of conservatism and force are better able to maintain wealth, but fall behind in creating it. They end through the gradual rise to leadership of the opposite, the shrewd, non-violent type; though it is not so clear why, in Pareto's view, this is always bound to happen. There are obvious points of contact between this doctrine and Spencer's doctrine of the military and the industrial type of society. Only Spencer, with all his soul, prefers the latter, and naïvely identifying his preferences with the law of history, regards it as the one which is bound to survive; whereas Pareto prefers the former, concluding that after repeated interludes, it is always bound to return.

Pareto's *Sociology* was published one year after Spengler's *Decline of the West*. Both are the result of research conducted over the decade preceding the last war, and they must therefore be regarded as strictly contemporaneous, not having influenced one

another. Sorel and Pareto were friends, but there is no sign that Spengler even so much as knew about Sorel. Nevertheless, Spengler's views can be presented as a direct continuation of Sorel's and Pareto's. For what, according to Spengler, characterizes the early period of the great civilizations, is exactly what Pareto described and what Sorel aimed at bringing back: A society unquestioningly steeped in profound beliefs, constituting severe and strict rules of conduct. In other words early civilizations are religious, late civilizations, by contradistinction, are sceptical, utilitarian, materialistic, and finally disintegrate through the rupture of the bonds of morals and beliefs which keep society together. Spengler is superior to Pareto through his avoidance of the pseudo-biological contortions of Pareto's argument, and also—which is much more important—through his success in relating the two social types described by Spencer and Pareto to definite historical periods. With Spencer it looks as if an industrial society, once established, were bound always to be stronger than a military one. In terms of Pareto's doctrine, it is impossible to say when the one and the other can and will arise. Spengler fits them into a precise time-schedule: Early civilizations are religious, late ones sceptical.

It is not difficult to sum all this up and to find a formula for the dominating trend in it. The nineteenth century, the era of liberalism and of the growth of Democracy is, at the same time, the period when big business becomes paramount, when finance becomes a decisive political power, when wars become rare, when the working-classes gradually rise to a better standard of living, when religion decays, and when the mark of civilization is seen in the disappearance of all fierce beliefs, all violent forms of action. It is inevitable that certain groups should view these developments with disgust, groups, that is, who are deeply steeped in the old ways. They are not, mostly, the groups at the top, for it is relatively easy for those to adapt themselves to the new conditions. There is no great problem in a Grandee becoming a financial grandee. The fiercest reactions are called forth among the old, traditional, middle middle-classes, who no longer understand the world. It is not material whether these middle middle-classes are bearers of titles; rather one would say that the lower aristocracy, of which Pareto is a typical member, shares the disgust at the new mode of life with the provincial bourgeois

'notables', whose prejudices Sorel painfully reveals in the midst of his most revolutionary utterances. The reaction of these groups is originally merely conservative. It is a statement valid without exception that all thinkers even remotely connected with Fascism and its precursors have been prompted by conservative instincts, that Conservatism is their starting-point. But it is a great mistake to mix up a man's background, and his ingrained instincts, with the actual rôle he plays in society. The story of Fascism is the story of Conservatives driven into revolution—and a fierce and sweeping sort of revolution—unknowingly, and much against their instincts. This is clearest in the case of Sorel, to whom there were two things sacred: The notion of property as given in Roman Law (absolute, unrestricted personal property), and the most Puritanical interpretation of monogamous sex morals. (He went so far as to maintain that chastity had won the war of 1870 for Germany; one might wonder whether it was also chastity which won so many wars for France during the revolutionary and Napoleonic period.) Sorel joins (temporarily) the Labour movement, because he expects it to restore the bourgeois values. But in order to do so, it must be splendidly violent, ruthless and crude, hence utterly anti-bourgeois. A fine muddle!

Yet the muddle is in the things, much more than in their interpretations. As I have said, the dangers which these old, decent, traditionalist middle middle-classes apprehend, are not imaginary dangers. They are real enough. The rôle of Cassandra, towards the end of the nineteenth century, and down to our present day, was always necessary. Only Cassandra herself found out that it is sometimes little use being Cassandra. In order to restore the old standards, you must first have people believing in them unquestioningly. But if there were people awake to the complexity of modern life, and at the same time deeply steeped in the old standards, there would never have been the series of ignominious collapses of civilization through which we all have lived. And do these champions of the old standards believe in them? It is more than doubtful. Here we approach still a little further the roots of Fascism.

Sorel, always the most muddle-headed, the most Utopian, but also the most profound of our proto-fascists, had his very strict moral ideas. He also believed that these moral severities were more acceptable to the proletariat than to the bourgeoisie—and Pareto

thought the same. Yet there is a doctrine in Sorel's writings which shows that he did not really believe what he thought he believed. It is the famous doctrine of the 'social myth'. There exists a strict parallelism between this doctrine and Sorel's conception of Socialism.

We saw that Socialism, for Sorel, meant the prevention of any undue interference of the State in private business. Now the means by which Sorel wants to introduce this strange sort of Socialism is the general strike, the decisive weapon, the Napoleonic battle of the class-struggle, in the view of all syndicalists. Now Sorel's view of this conception which he himself did so much to propagate, is contained in the following unintentionally cynical statement. 'Experience proves that certain conceptions of an uncertain future can be of great service without any considerable inconvenience; this is the case with the myths which embody the strongest tendencies of a people, a party or a class, tendencies which obtrude themselves with the force of an instinct all the time. We know that these social myths do not by any means prevent a man to take advantage of the experience of life and do not in the least interfere with the fulfilment of his ordinary tasks.' In other words: The wise interpreter of syndicalism knows that the idea of the general strike is rubbish. But his fold must believe in this idea of the great Napoleonic battle of the class-struggle with an instinctiveness impermeable to argument. Otherwise they will be inclined to utilitarian compromises, and the healthy effects of ruthlessness will not be forthcoming.

Now look at this almost incredible paradox. Here is a man who, in matters of a moral code of property and of family life, has ingrained ideas quite sufficiently impermeable to argument to provide him with a fighting creed. This creed is also the creed of his own class, the provincial middle middle-classes. But he feels only too clearly that in their hands this creed has lost the strength which gives inspiration. So he turns away from his own very real and forceful prejudices, in order to enhance the abstract value of the prejudices of a section of the proletariat, prejudices in which he does not by any means believe. Here is the dividing line between reactionary Conservatism and Fascism. Here, I believe, is the essence of the Fascist soul. The old Conservative classes, the lower aristocracy which, in France, was embodied in the traditions of the Vendée, and the provincial bourgeoisie so

important in French affairs since the seventeenth century, *had* prejudices. Proof of it, that they did not regard them as prejudices, but as truth and decency itself. The Conservatives of the beginning of the twentieth century, however, were living in an atmosphere of disintegration of long-established rules of conduct. They no longer had any prejudices whose social validity they would be confident to assert. Instead, they were driven to develop a profound enough, yet self-contradictory doctrine of the value of prejudice, hardness and mythical thought in the abstract. When a myth is known to be a myth, yet still upheld, it becomes an outright lie. The definition of a myth is that its believers do not regard it as a myth, but as supernatural reality. There is no valid truth, these Neo-Conservatives might say, not at any rate any truth for which it would be worth while to lay down one's life and sacrifice other lives. But without such truths life, individual and social, is bound to disintegrate. So let's act the other way round. Let's start being ruthless and prejudiced to excess. The faith which used to inspire ruthless and prejudice will then be given unto us.

It is not that the analysis given by these thinkers were so completely wrong. What could be more pertinent than to emphasize the rôle of power, the value of traditions, the need of a self-sacrificing mentality, the danger of the disintegration of existing standards of conduct without putting other equally valid standards into their stead? But the people who advocate it all ought first to believe in it themselves, and they don't. That is what is most Fascist in Fascist thinking. That is what makes Fascism something so profoundly different from the fanaticism of the religious wars.

For it is one thing to be ruthless in the pursuit of a goal (that was what the Inquisition did, and Calvin when he burnt Servetus, and that was what happened in Spain a few years ago) and quite a different thing to pursue a goal because it stimulates ruthlessness in the abstract—and that is what the blackshirts did first, and the S.S. after their model. The distinction is not one of logic. Its niceties may be difficult to formulate—but in real life the man with a real faith draws the boundary-line without much difficulty. The Fascist is constitutionally unable to draw that boundary line—he must therefore be traditionalist in the abstract, hence he returns to entirely meaningless traditions such as old Rome in

Italy, Wotan in Germany; he must be ruthless in the abstract, hence persecutes even his potential friends against his most immediate interests, etc., etc.

At the same time he is unable to give a reasonable formula for what he is actually achieving. I have pointed above to the almost incredible fact that none of the precursors of Fascism so much as envisaged either its economic form—thorough planning—or its political form, the totalitarian state. Yet I believe that a valid case can be made out for the first, and though I emphatically reject the second, I yet believe that a sensible case can be made out in its favour. Yet not by Fascist! To them, their very achievements are only stepping-stones to mad outbursts. In order to say 'Look here, these are our aims and our achievements', one must believe in the definite value of something. Otherwise, even aims and achievements can only be incidents of a destructive propaganda campaign.

The senselessness of life—this is the great subject matter of Fascist doctrine. I have pointed to this conclusion in respect of Sorel's doctrine. It is equally applicable to that of Pareto. Pareto's basic concept of social psychology is the 'residue'. Residues, in Pareto's system, are permanent combinations of ideas prompting permanent types of behaviour. But all impulses are residues. For residues are by definition 'nonlogical', while there are also logical actions, hence actions not determined by residues. Those logical actions are all aiming at the intelligent pursuit of self-interest. All other actions are determined by 'residues'. 'Taboo' is the prototype of residues. It is, in Pareto's definition, an aversion of a given group to a given type of activity, open to no further explanation. It is 'simply a non-logical nucleus uniting certain acts with determined effects'. In other words, all non-utilitarian action is absolutely meaningless, completely inexplicable, and, we must conclude, differs from sheer madness only in so far it is not specific to an individual, but common to a group. The senselessness of life could not be more emphatically insisted upon. And this is the basis of a far-reaching sociological doctrine!

Spengler, on this point, does not differ from either Sorel or Pareto. There is nothing particularly negativistic and destructive in the doctrine of culture-cycles, and given such a doctrine it needs an ample measure of naïveté to believe that we are now in the ascending phase of our civilization. What is, however, typically

and specifically Fascist in Spengler's theory is his almost furious insistence that, in the teeth of overwhelming evidence, there is no connection between one civilization and any other one, that there is no history of mankind as a whole. The great civilizations, he literally says, are 'gloriously meaningless'. Here the circle is closed. Fascism started with the shame-faced whisper that, after all, all ideals are dead and that, in order to keep human affairs going, an artificial stimulus of ruthlessness must be infused into them, by however insincere means. It ends with the assertion that the complete meaningless of life is the basis of sound philosophy.

But let us not be self-righteous. He that is without blame may cast the first stone. The absence of values able to prompt determined action is not limited to Fascist circles. The war has fortunately brought out the fact that, in some countries, negative values at least exist in sufficient strength, that people are still ready to die to ward off certain extreme evils. But the feeling of pointlessness of positive effort has not yet gone. I believe that it is deeply ingrained. It is the root-fact of Fascism. No easy solution, no facile watchword, will undo it. It is not only the root-fact of Fascism, it is also the root-problem of mankind at the present moment.

Yet one thing seems certain enough. In the context of the Fascist philosophy of meaninglessness even those elements of Fascism which otherwise would have meaning can only be incidents in a sanguinary tragi-comedy of self-destruction. There may be something to be learnt from our enemies. But our enemies cannot learn it. Only anti-Fascists can bring out the positive elements of our age.

STEPHEN SPENDER

MODERN POETS AND REVIEWERS

MR. ALEX COMFORT's admirably intelligent letter in the May number of *Horizon* serves as a link between my article on 'Poetry in 1941' and the present Postscript. This letter clarifies the attitude of poets under thirty to poetry and the limited extent to

which they consider themselves interpreters of the war. The war has caused a sharp division of writers into three generations: the generation of those who were consistently blind to events from 1918 to 1939 and who now find themselves in the strongly entrenched positions in literature, the arts, and home affairs which fall to the superannuated during times of war; the 'New Writing' generation of those who were acutely aware of the approaching war, ever since 1933, and who therefore regard it almost with relief, as a fulfilment of their prophecies; the generation of those who are the war's victims, too young to have been in any way responsible for it, and in some ways filled with bitterness against the preceding generations.

What has this to do with poetry? Very little, but it has a good deal to do with the criticism of contemporary poetry, as anyone who reads the literary periodicals will know. Writers, little known writers in particular, cannot afford to be indifferent to what is said about them. The fact that there is a likelihood of literature falling into the hands of a generation who have little sympathy with the new; the existence of an intermediate generation who regard this war as a fulfilment of their forebodings during the past ten years, and as, perhaps, the beginning of a new era; all this is tough on Mr. Comfort and his friends, who 'see this war as a degenerative, not a conflict process'.

We are therefore certainly reaching a stage when the abused term 'young writer' has a meaning different from the sentimental one in which it has been used to appeal to the maternal instincts of reviewers and editors during the past ten years. 'A young writer' for the next ten years will mean a writer produced by this war, who has written nothing before it, and whose work wears the birthmark of October 1939.

All this will seem nonsense to the run of reviewers of poetry who—some months after a volume has been published—are unleashed to produce those snarls and gibes, twenty words long, peculiar to this field of literature. 'We judge poetry only by external standards', the chorus of Humbugs cries. 'We do not care about young or old, new or reactionary.'

Yet, looking at the volumes in front of me, I can readily recall some of the standards by which I have seen them judged. For instance, Sheila Shannon, reviewing *Work in Hand*, in the *Spectator*, finds Mr. Graves's poems 'bitter on too personal a note.

'Need the poet make a public show of his private agonies?' she cries (somewhat irrelevantly, it must be admitted, as this is the last thing which Mr. Graves does).

One might confine oneself to answering with the one reminder: 'Catullus'. Yet it is more important to point out that criticism is not criticism which does not, primarily, consider work for what it is; and yet nearly all poetry is criticized for what it is not. Mr. Graves writes a poem which is 'bitter'; another poet one which is 'personal'; a third poet writes a poem expressing a fantastic vision of the future; and all these are not criticized, but just dismissed by the reviewer; not because they have failed, but because they have succeeded in doing what they set out to do, and their very aim is counted as failure. The critics use all the resources of Victorian morality, the Austerity Campaign, psychoanalysis, politics, and pure æsthetics, to dismiss any thinkable kind of subject matter for poetry, without taking the trouble to read it. On these grounds, if they were living today, Petrarch would be dismissed as self-pitying, Shelley as a Narcissist, Keats as self-centred, and so on. As a matter of fact, the anarchy of standards is so great, that I have seen some of these writers attacked on these lines. At the very worst, one writer is used as a stick to beat another with, and the whole of the past is invoked to show that Mr. Graves, instead of being bitter in a small way, should be 'bitter with a huge bitterness and furious with a devouring fury'.

Having no standards whatever by which to judge literature, reviewers appropriate every standard which they can lay hands on. Reading Miss Shannon's *Spectator* review one would think that she had the genius of Sappho combined in one mortal frame with the moral fervour of Jeanne d'Arc. It is often a consolation, when one is slated, to rest (as one might in the all-pervading but uncomfortable love of God) in the wonderful genius of one's critics. The poems of Dr. Leavis, the sapphics of Miss Shannon, of what perfection one dreams! Alas, though, I am brought to earth by a typical production of this kind in *Lyra—Merlin to Man-kind*, by that austere standard-bearer, Mr. Robert Herring. It is a typical reviewer's cake-walk along a garden made of artificial crazy-paving:

'Learn, belov'd loons, for whom my sleep is done:

No farther break; but turn, and face, your Sun.'

The young poets are right to publish manifestoes, such as the

Foreword to *Lyra*, explaining what they are after. Poetry needs criticism which judges it within the limits and tasks which it sets itself. There is, of course, a further standard which judges it for what it is, and the writer for what he is, but to be too conscious of this will simply distract a writer from the work he has in hand. The most common failure in literature is the failure to accept one's limitations: to do what one can do, instead of what one would wish to do. It is not helpful that critics should dismiss work by judging it from standards according to which it should not exist. Obviously such criticism is entirely destructive both of poetry and the poet's personality. For example, if all Whitman's critics, instead of estimating his achievement for what it was worth, had confined themselves to pointing out that he was a homosexual Narcissist, he would either have had to shut their criticism completely out of his consciousness or else stop writing. Mr. Comfort explains that *Poems from the Forces* is 'a poetic version of the state we see in psychological out-patients every Wednesday and Friday afternoon'. Well, we should judge the poetry of Fraser, Comfort, Litvinoff and Moore as that, before we dismiss it as that. The Pétainism of the young poets must be allowed for.

By the standards within which it exists, Robert Graves's poetry is remarkably successful. Technically he is a master, his vocabulary and music have a bite and tang which is as recognizably his own as is, say, the blank verse of Massinger. His imagination is of a Germanic, Grimm's-fairy-tale kind. Fundamentally he is a naïf poet: his poems grow out of harsh and bitter experience like gnarled trees out of harsh soil. But they are also given a twist by a German taste for abstraction, which expresses itself often in compound words like 'unevent' and 'one-hour-seeming'. Moreover, often the meaning of a poem is reaching towards some such philosophic abstraction which is in contrast to the tangibility of imagery and language in which it is conveyed.

Norman Cameron is a fine technician. His poems have the neatness of epigrams. The language, with the toughness of Graves, is extremely pleasurable; but the thought tends towards the commonplace thought (as in *The Invader*) or experience (*The Wanton's Death*) superbly well expressed, whereas there is something mysterious and inaccessible about Graves's world.

Alan Hodge has acquired the discipline of Graves and Cameron.

This means that his poems have striking passages of natural observation: he is particularly good on the weather. But at present they are so imitative that I cannot readily distinguish them from their models.

The Third Selection of *Poets of Tomorrow* contains the best of the series. These poets—with the possible exception of Mr. Gascoyne—are closer to the writing of Graves and Cameron than to that of Fraser and Comfort. Lawrence Little is a careful and observant writer painting scenes of lower middle-class and working-class life very minutely. His poems are touching, sordid, sometimes beautiful, sad and nostalgic:

‘There is some grass, too thin
To be windblown, and some struggling
Nasturtiums, sown after their rightful
Natal period. And they are seemingly peaceful.’

All his poems in this selection are good, and I would like to see a volume of them published. Gascoyne’s poems are somewhat ‘Eightiesh’, gracefully tired and mellifluous. They flow on languidly, but attractively, in a kind of poetic journalism. His poems are very readable, though they lack concentration, either of words or rhythm.

Laurie Lee would have been hailed some years ago as an imagist poet. His eye and senses are remarkably vivid, and his writing has a flickering, animal quality. He is a truthful, unthinking, though not unreflective writer, noting down his experiences in pictures made of words:

‘By day the print of your body
is like a stroke of sun on my hands
and the choir of your blood
goes chanting incessantly
through the echoing channels of my wrists.’

This is charming because it is true. The Jeanne-d’Arc-Sappho of *The Spectator* writes of Laurie Lee, ‘most of his faults are attributable to a quite original lack of poetic talent’. One is tempted to think that the lady has never been loved.

Adrian Drinan is another close and observant writer; his subjects are Sutherland and the Western Isles. His work has the tough, musical honesty, closeness to nature and nationalist

traditionalism, which seems to be growing to the proportions of a movement in the arts in Scotland. Besides publishing in *Poets of Tomorrow*, he has brought out a volume (very nicely printed and on beautiful paper) with The Fortune Press. It is called *The Men of the Rocks*. The Fortune Press seems to be one of the most enterprising modern publishers; and they are doing a great service to literature in publishing volumes by such writers as Gavin Ewart, Ruthven Todd, D. S. Savage, Roy Fuller, George Woodcock, Francis Scarfe, Nicholas Moore, John Waller and Julian Symons. All these writers are worth watching, and their volumes are worth collecting.

Ruthven Todd's volume in this series is called *Until Now*. It contains some new poems, and poems which deserve to be well known, if they are not, such as *In September 1937*. Mr. Todd is a writer of close observation, like the other writers whom I have been reviewing. He also has Graves's gift of creating memorable legends. His earlier poems suffer a bit from too many undigested references to bombs, like all poetry of that period. His poems are remarkably well written, and often contain beautiful imagery. They are stifled at times by a too heavy load of references to literary ancestry. They move a little stiffly from line to line. They have little lightness and freedom of movement.

Lyra is, to my mind, a better book than *Poems from the Forces*. There is a more interesting and discriminating choice of poets than in the earlier collection; the poems by the individual poets are more interesting; there is a striking Preface by Mr. Herbert Read; and a Foreword by the editors, Alex. Comfort and Robert Greacen.

Enough has been said to show that these poets are pacifist in philosophy. The best poems are by Alexander Comfort, who works out the logic of a strange and beautiful image in 'The Atoll of the Mind'; G. S. Fraser, whose 'Two Sonnets' and 'Birthday Greeting' resemble the evanescent yet beautifully controlled water-colours of David Jones. This poetry is more than romantic on the surface, it is also full of the sense of weakness, frustration, and tears of the young. There is a facile and conventionally pleasant 'Spring Poem' by John Bayliss. Other striking poems are by Robert Greacen, Emanuel Litvinoff, and F. T. M. Smith. Vernon Watkins, Henry Treece, Francis Scarfe, and Anne Ridler are better known; they are all at their best in this anthology, which

really serves as a useful introduction to the work of these writers. I suppose one must speak of them as a movement; though a movement is much more the propaganda that a group of poets make for themselves in the absence of sympathetic criticism than any common poetic aim which they share between them. However, these writers do have superficial resemblances: the sense that they are victims of the war, a touching sense of deprivation in love, and an almost childlike attitude towards women.

Besides the Fortune Press, they have another courageous publisher in the Favil Press's series of Resurgam Poets. These are shilling pamphlets containing work by young writers: Numbers Six and Seven are by Alex Comfort and Emanuel Litvinoff.

Incidentally *Lyra* contains the best poem I have yet seen by Nicholas Moore: the short elegy For a Repertory Actor Killed in a Car Smash.

Mr. Henry Treece is looked up to by these writers as a leader, and his poems therefore have a special interest. They grow from the Welsh twilight of the earliest poems to the violent, intoxicated declamations of the sequence called Towards a Personal Armageddon at the end. The early poems are accomplished and attractive, though they are as arbitrarily lacking in originality as the later poems are bursting with it:

‘Love has no limits like the year,
Nor like the word depends on breath;
Desire is started by a tear,
And Passion dances after Death.’

It is impossible to give the feeling of the later poems without quoting at least twenty lines; but in a violent, swaggering manner, they are powerful and effective. For a long time poetry has been inhibited, and over careful; Mr. Treece lets himself go into a fine carefree rapture. His poems should certainly be read by everyone interested in the development of modern poetry. It is not possible for me to make any criticism of value about them. At first I did not like them; now I am affected by their power, though I find the braggadocio distasteful.

My severe remarks about reviewers should be qualified by a word of praise for such critics as Edwin Muir, K. J. Raine, and one or two of the anonymous reviewers in *The Listener* and *The Times Literary Supplement*, who do far more than bring their

prejudices to bear on poems which they have not troubled to read. They also qualify some of my own remarks in my previous review: it might be a good innovation if *Horizon* lets its reviewers occasionally have 'second thoughts' as do members of the Brains Trust.

A time has now come when it is possible to say that there is definitely a new movement in poetry: this movement is politically pacifist, defeatist even. Yet these are the politics of the poets who are soldiers in the army: their hatred of war is a literary rather than a political attitude. It is a rejection of the level of experience in which they are compelled to spend their lives, in the search for another level where they are most conscious of the 'apocalyptic' nature of the events around them. To be aware of this, they must see the disconnectedness rather than the connectedness of things; they must see the natural cataclysm rather than the logical development of the destructive machine age.

With the best will in the world, it is difficult to think that much of value can be said by critics about these writers at the present stage. But they are a significant development; their minds are, indeed, representative of that of many ordinary people, who feel that they are living at the end of a world rather than at the beginning of a new social order. Readers should not look to the critics for their opinions: they should read the work of these young poets and judge for themselves.

Lyra. Edited by Alex Comfort and Robert Greacen. (G.W.P. 5s.)

Invitation and Warning. By Henry Treece (Faber 6s.)

Work in Hand. By Robert Graves, Norman Cameron, Allan Hodge. (Hogarth 2s. 6d.)

Poets of Tomorrow (Third Selection). By Lawrence Little, David Gascoyne, Laurie Lee, Adam Drinan, Arthur Harvey. (Hogarth 6s.)

Resurgam Poets, Numbers 1-7. (Favil Press, 1s. per volume)

AN OPEN LETTER

TO HERBERT READ FROM HARTLEY RAMSDEN

Dear Herbert,

1st May 1942

As you said you would be interested to know what I thought about your article in the April number of *Horizon*, I am taking you at your word and sending you a short comment. Yet, while I differ fundamentally on certain

points, I write in no carping spirit, but in recognition of the importance of the issues you have raised.

To begin with, there is, of course, no disputing what you say about the artistic negligibility of the Forces Exhibition on the one hand, and the inadequacy of the Surrealist contribution to the show at Lancaster House on the other, though in so far as your estimate of the Constructivist achievement is concerned, it seems to me that your title is belied. I think it is unfortunate, however, that by some oversight Barbara Hepworth, whose work both as a sculptor and as a draftsman possesses a rare distinction, should not have been referred to in this connection.

Despite your insistence on the cultural importance of the aims of the Surrealists and on the æsthetic validity of the work of the Constructivists, I must confess that I am not left with any clear impression as to whether, in the last analysis, you regard either movement as socially relevant, since your argument seems to imply that they are, but your conclusions that they are not. Nor do I see how one can accept Breton's view that the transcendence of the work of art is at an end, while at the same time acknowledging an artistic hierarchy of any kind—which brings me to the main point at issue, namely, as to whether the belief in the independence of the work of art is, in fact, an illusion.

Personally, I do not believe that it is; nor do I think that the gifts of the artists are other than exceptional, no matter how cultivated the sensibilities of the ordinary man may be. It is, moreover, on this account, and also because the artist, as such, is in advance of his time, that he is valuable, for which reason he must be left free to pursue his course unhindered by any other consideration whatsoever.

This, however, is not to deny that art, like all other human functions, is a social activity, but it is so only indirectly and in a specialized sense. That is to say, its value to the community lies in the very fact that it is transcendental and cannot, therefore, be subordinated to social interests of a lesser and of a different order. Yet at the same time there is equally no denying the need that is being borne in upon us as never before, the need for a 'reevaluation of man's prime instincts', nor the desperate difficulty of 're-establishing faith, honour, ideals on new bases'. But of one thing I am certain, and it is this—that it is only through a *reintegration of the individual* and an intensification of personal experience, and not through any kind of mass organization, that this can be achieved. It is for this reason that I regard the contribution of the artist as so immensely important, because the appeal of his work is, finally, only and always to the individual. So that if it is true that 'art is a virtue of the mind' that 'exists only in the living intellectuality of the habit', then it affords today, as it has always done, a unique method of catharsis, without which that grace in the living of life which alone endows it with meaning, can hardly be attained. It seems to me, therefore, that what is required is not so much 'the exaltation of the instinct of mutual aid', which, in a communal sense, always tends to provide an excuse for the shifting of personal responsibility, but a will to perfection and a profounder recognition on the part of the individual of what Socrates meant when he said 'Give us beauty in the inward soul'.

Yours,

HARTLEY RAMSDEN

RECENT POETRY

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